

FEBRUARY 2024

CONNECTIONS



**BUILDING
COMMUNITY**

2024 CHURCHWIDE RETREAT

PARADOX

WHEN LOSS IS GAIN

FEBRUARY 9 – 11 AT CAMP MCDOWELL

Our annual church-wide retreat at Camp McDowell is approaching and we are looking forward to spending the weekend together. In addition to our large group learning sessions, we will spend time playing games, singing karaoke, making smores, and taking time to rest and recharge. We ask for your prayers for a safe journey and meaningful time away. If you are not able to attend the retreat, we will have a virtual-only service on Sunday, February 11 at 9:00am viewable through our YouTube livestream.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11
**VIRTUAL
WORSHIP
ONLY**

Because of the church-wide retreat, there will be no in-person worship on Sunday, February 11. We invite you to view our virtual service which will feature content and themes from the material we are covering during retreat sessions. As a reminder our virtual service streams at 9:00am on [YouTube](#) and is available to stream any time following.

Wandering Heart

Figuring out faith with Peter

Like many of us, Peter has a wandering heart. His journey is not polished, or linear, or perfect, but he is always tethered to the love of God. When you look closely at Peter's story, you find Jesus at each step along the way — offering him abundance, catching him when he begins to sink, challenging him when he stands in the way, washing his feet, predicting his betrayal, and offering him agapē love. This Lent, we're joining Peter in figuring out faith. We're not idolizing or vilifying him; instead, we're hoping to wander alongside him, open to what we might learn about Jesus (and ourselves) by stepping in his shoes.

2.18 | Wandering Heart: "Jesus sought me"

LUKE 5:1-11 | PSALM 25:1-10

2.25 | Wandering Heart: "Rescue me from danger"

MATTHEW 14:22-33 | PSALM 22:23-31

3.3 | Wandering Heart: "Praise the mount"

MATTHEW 16:13-20 | PSALM 19

3.10 | Wandering Heart: "I'm fixed upon it"

MATTHEW 16:21-23 | PSALM 107:1-3, 17-22

3.17 | Wandering Heart: "Teach me"

MATTHEW 18:15-22 | PSALM 119:9-16

3.24 | Wandering Heart: "Songs of loudest praise"

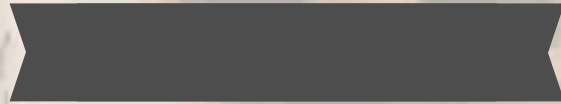
JOHN 12:12-16

3.31 | Wandering Heart: "And I hope"

LUKE 24:1-12

ASH

W E D N E S D A Y



FEBRUARY 14 AT 12:00PM IN THE CHAPEL AND 6:00PM IN THE SANCTUARY

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of our Lenten season as a church family. It is a time of worship marked by remembering our humanity and mortality. We recognize it is God's love that invites all into repentance and reconciliation. In worship we will receive ashes on our hands or foreheads in an act of repentance and a sign of penitence. Join us for one of our Ash Wednesday Services at 12:00pm in the Chapel or 6:00pm in the Sanctuary following Wednesday night dinner. (Don't forget to make your dinner reservation [HERE](#)).

FIRST CHURCH BIRMINGHAM'S

LENT

SCHEDULE

FEBRUARY 14

ASH WEDNESDAY

12:00PM | THE CHAPEL & 6:00PM | THE SANCTUARY

MARCH 24

PALM SUNDAY

11:00AM | THE LOFT & SANCTUARY

MARCH 28

MAUNDY THURSDAY

6:00PM | THE LOFT

MARCH 29

GOOD FRIDAY

12:00PM | THE SANCTUARY

Wednesday Night **DINNER** & **PROGRAMMING**

We hope you have been able to attend and experience our Wednesday Night Dinners in this new year. 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, late-February brings the launch of a new round of small groups. Click [HERE](#) to read more about our February 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.

POVERTY SIMULATION

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24 FROM 9:30AM – 1:00PM

You are invited to join us for a unique opportunity to take a glimpse into the structural barriers, as well as some of the personal and emotional repercussions people in poverty face as The North Alabama Conference's "Ministry with the Poor" team will host a Community Action Poverty Simulation on Saturday, February 24 in the Large Dining Room. The event will begin at 9:30am, include a light lunch, and conclude at approximately 1:00pm.

This learning tool has been created as a way to help people understand the realities of poverty. During the simulation, participants will role-play the lives of low-income families by providing for basic necessities and shelter on a limited budget during the course of four 15-minute "weeks." Participants will interact with human service agencies, grocers, pawnbrokers, bill collectors, job interviewers, police officers, and more. We hope that by participating in the simulation you will view poverty from a variety of different angles and find potential areas for change within our own local community.

This event is open for all. Click [HERE](#) to register for the Poverty Simulation.

2ND & 3RD MISSIONARY JOURNEYS OF PAUL CRUISE

WITH TRINITY, GRACE, CANTERBURY, & FIRST CHURCH

OCTOBER 8 - 20

As we continue to pray for all those impacted by the war in Gaza, we have made changes to our Passages of the Bible cruise itinerary for October. While travel to Israel is not possible, we are still able to experience Egypt, Greece, and Turkey as we explore Paul's 2nd and 3rd missionary journeys. For pre and post trip excursions you can choose a Nile River Cruise, a visit to Petra and the Dead Sea, sightseeing in Rome, or visiting additional ancient sights in Greece. Click [HERE](#) to read more and to sign up to join us.

THEOLOGY, IDENTITY, & ME

AN AFFIRMING STUDY OF GENDER, SEX & HUMAN SEXUALITY

WITH RECONCILING MINISTRIES

Reconciling Ministries invites you to join other inclusive United Methodists from around the conference to discuss and learn more about affirming theology with a lens for diverse gender identities, expressions, and sexual identities. Join us on **Saturday, February 17 from 9:00am to 3:00pm** in the Loft at First Church. The cost is \$10 which will cover materials and food for the day. Click [HERE](#) to register to join us.



CHURCH OF THE
Reconciler
FUNDRAISER

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29 AT 12:00PM
IN THE LARGE DINING ROOM**

You are invited to join us in the Large Dining Room on Thursday, February 29 at 12:00pm as we support the incredible mission of Church of the Reconciler. As a “presenting sponsor” for this fundraising event, First Church has 21 spaces available for those who want to join us for lunch to learn more about the important work of COR and raise funds to support their ministry to the poor and unhoused in downtown Birmingham. If you would like to join us, you can make a reservation by calling our Church Office at 205-254-3186.

CITY KIDS UPDATES

SUMMER SAVE THE DATES

We are hard at work getting our summer dates on the calendar. In June, we will host another Gross Out Camp with Fresh Air Family (specific dates TBA). In July, mark your calendars for Arts Camp Monday, July 15 – Thursday, July 18. We can't wait for another summer of fun!

If you would like to be added to our CityKids emails, please reach out to Katie@firstchurchbhm.com.

YOUTH SUNDAY SCHOOL

DURING THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY WE WILL LOOK AT WHAT SCRIPTURE HAS TO SAY ABOUT SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN A SERIES CALLED

“RHYTHM.”

9:45AM ON SUNDAYS IN THE YOUTH ROOM

AS WE SEEK TO BE AN OPEN PLACE FOR ALL

MY PRAYER FOR FIRST CHURCH IS:

My prayer is for First Church to continue encouraging each other to live an authentic life of love for others.

- Sarah Coe

I pray for First Church to continue to love and support everyone as Jesus did. LOVE is what binds us together as people and First Church harbors love.

- Katie Coe

That First Church will continue to be a place of both respite and action, A place where anyone can find love and acceptance A place where we mourn and celebrate, teach and learn Together. That we will continue to grow our ability to treat each person as having inherent worth and dignity. That we remain committed to diversity, and respectful of those of differing yet humane views. That we work to minimize the inequities of circumstance and ability, and work to support a just distribution of nature's resources and the fruits of human effort so that as many as possible can enjoy a good life.

That we will strive toward a world of mutual care and concern, free of cruelty and its consequences. That we can be open to ideas and developments in science, the arts and human experience to help guide our paths together.

That we will help one another find wonder and awe in the joys and beauties of human existence, its challenges and tragedies, and even in the inevitability and finality of death.

- Ken Coe



FIRST CHURCH ONLINE DIRECTORY

Did you know that our online database offers us an online directory? Everyone who is a regular part of the First Church family has access to this online directory. You can find it at any time by visiting our website, clicking on the “Resources” tab and scrolling down to the tab labeled “directory.” You will need a username and password to enter the database. If you do not have this information (or cannot remember it from before), please reach out to Katie Gilbert at Katie@firstchurchbhm.com.

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 |
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| 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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