

MARCH 2024

CONNECTIONS



ON THE LENTEN
JOURNEY

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.

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

FIRST CHURCH BIRMINGHAM'S

HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

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

Embrace a **JOURNEY** in **COMPASSION**

THIS LENTEN SEASON

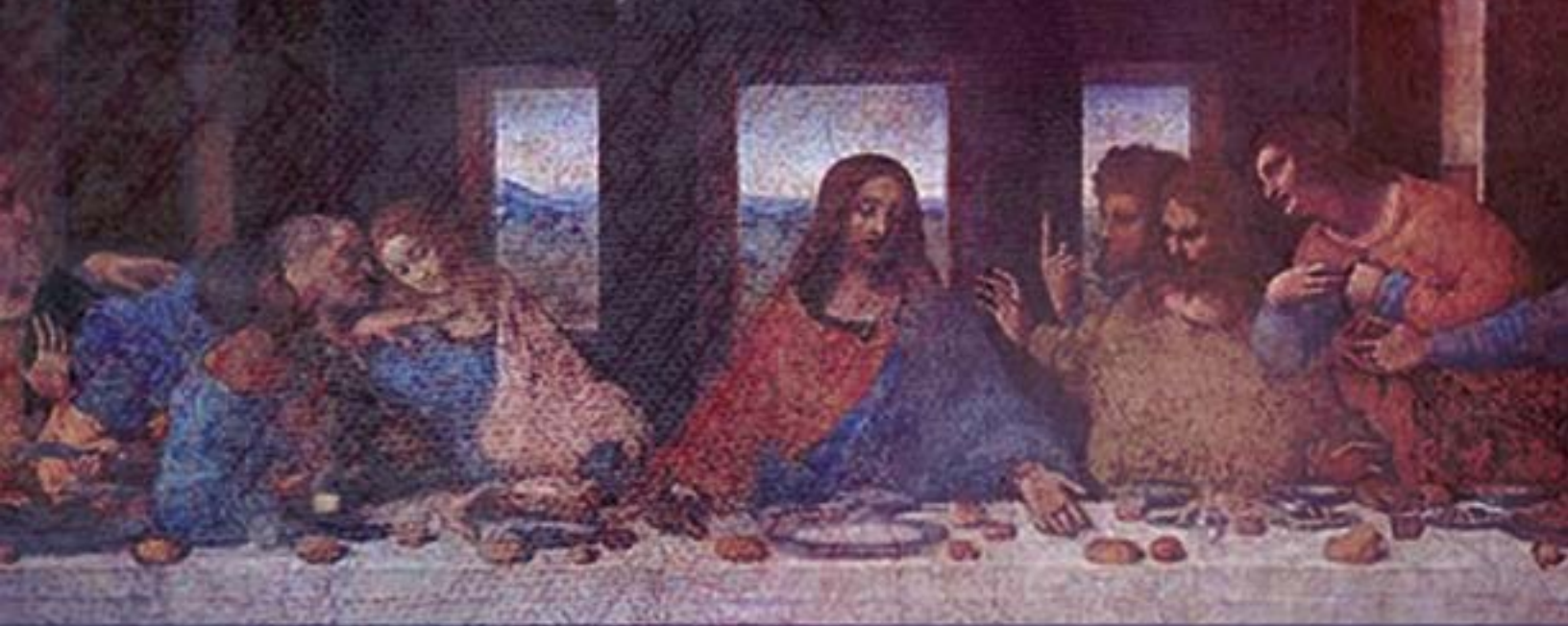
This Lent you are encouraged to embrace a journey of compassion by giving at least one hour of your time each week being proximate to a vulnerable community. This is an opportunity to give up the “can do” attitude of volunteerism and take on the humility of the curious, learning servant that Jesus models in his lived ministry. This invites us to get proximate to vulnerable communities NOT to “fix” or necessarily “do” something for them, but to listen, pay attention, embody compassion, be open-hearted, be curious, befriend, and be present to the suffering others experience in life. This is about learning the real meaning of compassion which is to “suffer with” others.

CLICK [**HERE**](#) TO READ MORE.

CLICK [**HERE**](#) FOR A LIST OF UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

THURSDAY, MARCH 28 AT 6:00PM IN THE LOFT



You are invited to join us for dinner at 5:00pm in the Large Dining Room before the Maundy Thursday worship service. This dinner will take the place of our normal Wednesday night meal for the week. Following dinner, you are invited to join us for worship and communion in the Loft at 6:00pm. Please click [HERE](#) to make reservations for dinner (as a reminder reservations are due on Monday, March 25 at 12:00pm). You do not have to attend dinner to come to worship. We hope you will plan on joining us for this special evening.



GOOD FRIDAY

FRIDAY, MARCH 29 AT 12:00PM IN THE SANCTUARY

You are invited to join us for a Tenebrae service on Good Friday, March 29 at 12:00pm in the Sanctuary as we commemorate the crucifixion and death of Jesus. The word Tenebrae is Latin for “darkness” or “shadows” and describes a service that offers prolonged meditation on the suffering of Christ. Through music, dramatic readings, and the play between light and dark we will remember what it must have felt like in those moments when Christ’s death darkened the world. We invite you to join us as we remember the grief and loss of Good Friday.



SATURDAY, MARCH 16
2:00PM - 3:30PM

President's Lawn at Birmingham Southern College's Campus
All are invited to join this fun event with bounce houses, cotton candy, crafts, and over 2,000 eggs! Bring a friend to hop in on the excitement.

EASTER HYDRANGEAS

Hydrangeas are available for Easter Sunday in the Sanctuary. They will come in a variety of colors in 8 inch pots for \$23.50 each and may be placed in honor or in memory of loved ones this Easter. After the service, you are invited to take them home to enjoy! Click [HERE](#) to place your order before Sunday, March 24. There are a limited number available to us this year.

EASTER

AT FIRST CHURCH

First Church will celebrate Easter Sunday morning with worship at 11:00am in both the Loft and Sanctuary. If you plan to attend, don't forget to bring flowers to add to our Easter Cross. Flowers can be from your home or garden (or even the grocery store!). As a reminder we have moved our flower cross to the front of our Sanctuary building along 19th Street so that it can serve as a reminder of resurrection to everyone who passes by our building. This is a great tradition that we look forward to continuing as we celebrate Easter together.

MARCH 9 FROM 9:00AM – 11:30AM IN THE LARGE DINING ROOM

RADICAL HOSPITALITY TRAINING

YOU ARE INVITED ON SATURDAY, MARCH 9 TO COME LEARN ABOUT HOSPITALITY WHILE EXPERIENCING IT FOR YOURSELF! REV. SHERYL THORNTON FROM CANTERBURY UMC WILL LEAD US IN A TIME OF INTENTIONAL LEARNING AROUND BEING RADICALLY HOSPITABLE SO THAT WE MAY CONTINUE TO GROW IN THE WAYS WE WELCOME GUESTS INTO THE BELONGING WE HOPE THEY FIND AT FIRST CHURCH.

CLICK [HERE](#) TO LEARN MORE AND REGISTER NOW.

FIRST CHURCH NAMETAGS

Over the years we've been asked many times to make nametags available for everyone at First Church. As we seek to grow our hospitality, we are making your dreams come to life. All nametags are magnetic and will feature the First Church logo in the top right hand corner. They are \$10 each which covers the costs of printing and shipping. All orders are due by **SUNDAY, MARCH 10** so that we can turn them around in time to wear them on Easter Sunday. We will plan to place orders on a regular rotation throughout the year to help with new people coming in as well as replacement orders that need to be made. Click [HERE](#) to order yours now.





UNREASONABLE HOSPITALITY

APRIL 7, 14, & 21 AT 4:00PM – 5:00PM
ON STEPHANIE ARNOLD'S BACK DECK IN VESTAVIA HILLS

The episode “Forks” in the Netflix hit *The Bear* is based off of the book *Unreasonable Hospitality* by Will Guidara. While the book shares stories and learning about hospitality and service experienced in the restaurant business, its wise lessons translate to any community seeking to love and serve others with intention and lavish generosity. You are invited to come alongside Executive Council Chair, Jennifer Waters and Rev. Stephanie York Arnold, as we explore this book and consider how we can allow it to transform our intentions and culture at First Church. Click [HERE](#) to sign up now.

SHAM ROCK N' ROLL

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20

**BRING OUT YOUR GREEN! JOIN US FOR A NIGHT OF CELEBRATION AS WE HONOR ST. PATRICK'S DAY
WITH AN IRISH DINNER, FESTIVE GAMES, AND A CHANCE TO WIN SOME REALLY COOL PRIZES.
REGISTRATIONS FOR DINNER ARE DUE THE MONDAY PRIOR BY 12:00PM. CLICK [HERE](#) TO REGISTER NOW.**

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 in the coming weeks. 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, we offer small groups and children and youth programming. Our Lenten small groups will continue through March 13. Click [HERE](#) to read more about our 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. On Wednesday, March 20, we will host a Shamrock 'n Roll celebration and on Wednesday, March 27 we will move our regular Wednesday meal to Thursday ahead of our Maundy Thursday service.

INVITATION TO EXPERIENCE A

Ramadan Meal

THURSDAY, MARCH 14 FROM 6:00PM – 9:15PM
AT BIRMINGHAM ISLAMIC COMMUNITY CENTER

The Birmingham Islamic Society has once again extended a community wide invitation to join them for a night of learning about the Muslim faith and celebrating with them the breaking of their fast for Ramadan. First Church has secured a reservation for 25 persons to join the evening on Thursday, March 14. Click [HERE](#) to learn more and sign up now.



ANNUAL
**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE &
FAITH-BASED
GATHERING**
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13 FROM 9:00AM-10:00AM

There is an alarming amount of domestic violence cases here in Jefferson County. Faith communities play a critical role in supporting the individuals and children impacted by domestic violence. This gathering is an opportunity for communities of faith to become more aware the impacts of domestic violence around them. One Place will share statistics, explain the cycle of power and control, and presenting available resources to help us be better equipped to support those experiencing domestic violence. If you are interested in attending you are asked to sign up [HERE](#).



JUNE 10 - JUNE 13 | 9:00AM - 4:00PM EACH DAY

We are once again partnering with Fresh Air Family's Gross Out Camp for four days of outdoor fun. The camp will take place in Trussville at Holy Cross Episcopal Church (right beside the Cahaba River!) and will focus on exploring God's creation in the woods, creeks, and fields. Fresh Air Family's Director and Lead Instructor will be helping to lead our camp.

COST WILL BE \$125 PER CAMPER AND WILL INCLUDE ALL MATERIALS AND SNACKS.

REGISTRATION IS OPEN NOW AND WE HAVE LIMITED CAPACITY.

(We will give priority to First Church Members and Frequent Visitors.)

CLICK [HERE](#) TO SIGN UP NOW.

CHILDREN & YOUTH PARENTS & VOLUNTEERS MEETING

SUNDAY, MARCH 17 FOLLOWING WORSHIP IN THE LARGE DINING ROOM

Come enjoy a light lunch and learn vital updates about our summer and future programming for children and youth. All parents and those interested in serving with children and youth are asked to attend.

(CHILD AND NURSERY CARE WILL BE EXTENDED WITH A RESERVATION.)

Click [HERE](#) to make a reservation for Lunch and/or Childcare.



YOUTH EXTRA GANZA

SATURDAY, MARCH 9 | 12:15PM - 4:00PM

CALLING ALL 4TH - 12TH GRADERS!

Get ready to roll, swing, and zap your way into an unforgettable adventure! Join us on Saturday, March 9 from 12:15pm - 4:00pm at Oak Mountain Lanes for an epic extravaganza featuring bowling, a ropes course, and heart-pounding laser tag battles.

Don't miss out on the fun, grab your friends and get ready for an afternoon of non-stop excitement! Cost is \$20 which includes lunch and access to all activities.

Register [HERE](#) to save your spot!

GENERAL CONFERENCE Q & A

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3 AT 6:00PM IN THE LOFT

On Wednesday, April 3 at 6:00pm we will come together as a church family to discuss what is coming before the United Methodist Church at General Conference. There will be a time to ask questions and to learn about this important gathering as it sets the tone for the future of the UMC. This will take the place of our regular Wednesday night programming for adults.

EXPLORING GENERAL CONFERENCE

General Conference is happening in Charlotte, North Carolina at the end of April. If you want to learn more about what General Conference is and why it is important, the United Methodist Church is offering a FREE online class. It offers you a comprehensive view General Conference, the top legislative assembly of The United Methodist Church. Click [HERE](#) to learn more and register now.



OFFICE SPACE AVAILABLE AT FIRST CHURCH

First Church is interested in the possibility of renting office space to tenants who align with our mission statement, priorities, and values. Are you a small business in need of office space and a Conference Room? Are you a counselor in need of a quiet and secure office or a massage therapist looking for space to meet clients downtown? Are you a musician looking to offer lessons? The possibilities are endless, but the office spaces available are not - so inquire **TODAY** about the opportunity to rent an office at First Church. Contact Rev. Katie Gilbert at Katie@firstchurchbhm.com

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.



UPDATE YOUR **CONTACT INFORMATION**

We know a lot has changed over the last year - 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

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**

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