

APRIL 2024

CONNECTIONS

EXTENDING OUR
WELCOME

UNREASONABLE HOSPITALITY

THE POWER OF A GENUINE WELCOME

*How do you make the people who work for you and the people you serve feel seen and valued?
How do you give them a sense of belonging? How do you make them feel part of
something bigger than themselves? How do you make them feel welcome?*

- Will Guidara

Hospitality was the foundation of the Bible's culture and is the backbone of many of the stories found in Scripture. Being gracious, generous, and intentionally welcoming others is a priority of our faith and our First Church community. In this series we will explore biblical stories as well as the teachings of Will Guidara, author of *Unreasonable Hospitality: The Power of a Genuine Welcome* as we explore the power of delivering extraordinary hospitality. Together we will learn how we can create a hospitality-first approach to ministry that leaves people feeling seen and truly welcomed.

4.7 | EXTRAORDINARY POWER OF INTENTION

GENESIS 18:1-8 , 2 KINGS 4:8-17, LUKE 10: 25-37

4.14 | CREATING A CULTURE OF COLLABORATION

ACTS 16: 11-15; 40, PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11

4.21 | RELATIONSHIPS ARE SIMPLE, SIMPLE IS HARD

LUKE 10: 38-42 , 3 JOHN 1:5-11



SMALL GROUP

APRIL 7, 14, & 21
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.

GENERAL CONFERENCE PRAYER SERVICES

SUNDAY, APRIL 28 AT 11:00AM IN THE LOFT AND SANCTUARY

On Sunday, April 28 in both our worship spaces we will spend time in prayer for General Conference. These services will be led by lay persons who will offer prayers for our hopes and dreams for the future of the United Methodist Church as well as prayers for healing from harm done. Together we will hold tight to hope and to one another as we seek to be a fully inclusive United Methodist Church.



COMBINED WORSHIP

SUNDAY, MAY 5 IN THE SANCTUARY

On Sunday, May 5 following the completion of General Conference we will worship together in the Sanctuary. Whether we are experiencing celebration for progress moving forward or mourning the continued struggle we will be together remembering that General Conference does NOT define First Church...Love does!

APRIL 22- MAY 3 | CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

2024 GENERAL CONFERENCE

This month begins the postponed 2020 General Conference of the United Methodist Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. Representatives from across our global connection will be gathering to vote on important church matters. This General Conference is extremely important to the future direction of the United Methodist Church and its inclusion of ALL people. We invite everyone to be in prayer that the approved legislation of this General Conference can help to move our United Methodist denomination forward with love and grace for ALL people. Click [HERE](#) to read more about Executive Council's hopes for General Conference



...and KNOW that I am GOD

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.

PICNIC
First Church

SUNDAY, APRIL 21
FOLLOWING WORSHIP

JOIN YOUR CHURCH FAMILY at a beautiful picnic lunch in the park on Sunday, April 21! We'll head to Railroad Park right after worship and enjoy the sunshine together. Bring your own lunch, a chair, and a blanket to sit on. You're also invited to bring any outdoor games to play with friends like frisbees, cornhole, or kites. Let's welcome summer in Birmingham the best way we know how!



Getting To KNOW US Dinner

THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 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, April 18 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, APRIL 28 FOLLOWING WORSHIP

On Sunday, April 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.

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

We hope you have been able to attend and experience our Wednesday Nights this 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, we offer small groups and children and youth programming. Our April small groups and dinners will be offered through April 24 before taking a break for the summer. 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.

MAGIC CITY ACCEPTANCE ACADEMY'S

SILENT DISCO

During April, which is Autism Acceptance Month, our partners at the Magic City Acceptance Academy are hosting a Silent Disco event on April 19 to provide a sensory-friendly and accepting environment for their students. MCAA is seeking donations to help ensure the success of this event. Click [HERE](#) to view their Amazon wish list.



LOUISE BRANSCOMB *BARRIER BREAKER AWARD* N O M I N A T I O N S (DUE FRIDAY, APRIL 12)

The Louise Branscomb Barrier Breaker Award is a way to recognize leaders in the North Alabama Conference who advocate for women and marginalized communities. The award was established by North Alabama United Methodist Women and is carried on by North Alabama's Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW) and was named after Dr. Louise Branscomb who was a longtime member of Birmingham First United Methodist Church.

Click [HERE](#) to read more and nominate for the award.

SENIOR EASTER LUNCH

THURSDAY, APRIL 4 AT 12:00PM IN THE LARGE DINING ROOM

With Spring in the air it's time to gather with our senior members for an Easter Lunch on Thursday, April 4 at 12:00pm in our Large Dining Room to celebrate. Dr. Patrick Evans will also join us so that we can share in the gift of beautiful music and singing! Click [HERE](#) to learn more and sign up now.

SUNDAY, APRIL 7 | AFTER WORSHIP

JUSTICE & MERCY LUNCH

Join us for lunch on Sunday, April 7 after worship to learn more about how to become involved in First Church's Justice and Mercy ministries. Lay leaders and staff who have responsibilities related to our ministry partners will share ways to engage in justice and mercy ministry with our partners throughout the upcoming year. Click [HERE](#) to register for lunch.

CITY KIDS ARTS CAMP 2024



CALLED TOGETHER TO SERVE GOD

ARTS CAMP IS BACK!

JULY 15 - 18 | 9:00AM - 1:00PM

During Arts Camp students will explore how they can be HEROES in their everyday lives. We will learn through crafts, science, song, dance, recreation, and more.

OUR HEROES WILL DIVE INTO THE FOLLOWING THEMES:

- **HEROES are Called to Follow Jesus.**
- **HEROES are Called to Help Others.**
- **HEROES are to Work Together.**
- **HEROES are called to show Grace!**

We are excited to offer Arts Camp at a rate of \$40 per camper which includes lunch and a morning snack. An extended Care option will be available for \$35 per camper and will run until 4:00pm each day. An afternoon snack will be provided.

Click [HERE](#) to register now!



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.

CITY KIDS UPDATES

FAMILY DAY AT THE ZOO

SATURDAY, MAY 4 | 9:00AM - 12:00PM

Gather your loved ones of all ages for a wild adventure amidst nature's wonders. From majestic lions to playful primates, there's something for everyone to marvel at! Parents simply pay for the ticket upon arrival at the zoo. Don't miss out on this fantastic opportunity to bond with other families from First Church while exploring the beauty of God's creation. See you there!

YOUTH MINISTRY

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

BRIDGE EVENT AT URBAN AIR

SATURDAY, APRIL 13 FROM 4:45PM – 7:15PM

ALL 4TH - 12TH GRADE STUDENTS ARE INVITED TO AN ADRENALINE-FUELED EVENING AT URBAN AIR IN HOMEWOOD, ALABAMA. FOR \$25 YOU CAN RUN, BOUNCE, AND JUMP ALL YOU WANT AND DINNER IS ON US! CLICK [HERE](#) TO REGISTER YOUR STUDENT FOR THE EVENT. AND PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU CLICK [HERE](#) TO COMPLETE THE WAIVER FOR URBAN AIR.

PASSPORT STUDENT CAMP

JUNE 23 – 28 IN SPARTANBURG, SOUTH CAROLINA

THIS WILL BE A TRIP FILLED WITH EXCITEMENT, GROWTH, AND UNFORGETTABLE MEMORIES. JOIN US FOR AN INCREDIBLE WEEK OF FUN ACTIVITIES, INSPIRING SESSIONS, AND MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS WITH FELLOW STUDENTS. CLICK [HERE](#) TO READ MORE AND REGISTER FOR THE EVENT.

LUNCH & LEARN

PRESENTED BY: MINISTRY WITH THE POOR

The North Alabama Conference Ministry with the Poor Team is now offering an online Lunch and Learn on the first Thursday of each month to share ideas and discuss being in ministry and relationship with underserved people in our communities. This is a new tool for people working with outreach, mission, and justice ministries to connect and learn. Click [HERE](#) to read more and access the Zoom link.

JUNE 23 – 28 IN SPARTANBURG, SOUTH CAROLINA

FIRST CHURCH COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP

The First Church Finance Team has created a process so that graduating seniors can apply for and access funds available to help those preparing for college. The amount and number of scholarships will be determined based on a number of factors, including funds available in the Living Church Fund. The scholarship application window will remain open through April 30, 2024 and award recipients will be notified by May 15. Click [HERE](#) to apply 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

AS WE SEEK TO BE AN OPEN PLACE FOR ALL

MY PRAYER FOR FIRST CHURCH IS:

That we continue to be a place where all are welcome, fully known, and fully loved.

- Becca Binford

***To remain in the reality of the world, extend love and acceptance and grace to all,
help where needed and be present in the lives of the congregation.
Encourage questioning and exploration and growth of the spirit.***

- Kim Thees

***That we create an open and inviting place for people committed to helping others and
that we focus on the positive impact the church can be on our community rather than
that infallibility or superiority of our beliefs, whatever those may be.***

- Zach King

***I have many special prayers for First Church, but the one on my heart is for large
numbers of people to find the love and welcoming environment here like I have.***

- Kelly Waites

***That God will continue leading and guiding people to this place of welcoming and love and will
use our family to show others the love of God through our involvement in this community.***

- Bobby and Christel Whitehead

***I pray that First Church continues to affirm all people. I pray that First Church continues
to grow and thrive and continue to be a beacon of hope in the city of Birmingham.***

- Naiema Hall

I pray First Church remains an open, loving place for all.

- Zandra Hunter

*We had so many new members in the past month that we ran out of room!
Look for the rest of our new member prayers from Joining Sunday in our May Newsletter.*



GIFTS RECEIVED BY THE CHURCH

TO THE MEMORIAL FUND

IN MEMORY OF PEGGY WEST

FROM JIM & JUDY COOK

FROM JUDEE & SCOTT EVANS

FROM RALPH JOLLY

FROM AYLWIN STUDY GROUP

IN MEMORY OF JOE CHALKER

FROM MATTHEW MCMILLAN

TO THE MUSIC FUND

IN MEMORY OF SARAH JOLLY

FROM RALPH JOLLY

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 Families & Youth: 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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Executive Director of Early Learning Center: Cassandra Copeland ELC@firstchurchbhm.com
Nursery Coordinator: Julie Caine..... Julie@firstchurchbhm.com



an OPEN place for ALL to **WORSHIP, GROW,** and **SERVE**

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