A low-angle photograph of a stone building with a large stained glass window and a modern glass skyscraper in the background. The stone building is on the right, and the glass skyscraper is on the left. A tree is in the foreground, partially obscuring the stone building. The sky is visible at the top.

# CONNECTIONS

SEPTEMBER 2025

# EMBRACING GENEROSITY



We all have a money story, whether we recognize it or not. Perhaps we are living from a story of fear or shame. Or a story that the church is dying and no longer relevant. Or a story that our actions won't have an impact. Or a story that we don't have enough. Where might God be speaking a new narrative into the limited ones we have told ourselves? This theme invites us to discover and tell our money stories in light of God's money story of liberation and justice. This series encourages us to transform our stewardship practices into more full expressions of who we are and what we believe.

This theme is intentionally direct—it invites us to name exactly what we're talking about and not skirt around it. To speak of money is to invite tension into the room. We so quickly want to avoid it. But it's time we reframe this. Money and possessions are one of the most common topics in scripture, and Jesus talked about money more than faith and prayer. Our money story, therefore, is a spiritual story. Thinking about God's money story should be liberating, inviting, and transformative.

This stewardship season, we invite you to remember, release, reimagine, and restore your money stories so that we can write the one God is begging us to live into.

9.7.25 **REMEMBER**

*LUKE 22:1-23, EXODUS 16:1-18*

9.14.25 **RELEASE**

*MATTHEW 19:16-22, DEUT. 15:1-11*

9.21.25 **REIMAGINE**

*MARK 12:38-44, LEVITICUS 19:9-10; 25:8-12*

9.28.25 **RESTORE**

*JOHN 21:1-19, GENESIS 33:1-17*

# FIRST CHURCH BIRMINGHAM STEWARDSHIP 2026



As we explore *OUR MONEY STORY* in this stewardship season, we will also be exploring the story that our budget tells about First Church. We have created a companion piece for this stewardship season which demonstrates the way that our finances function as an ecosystem, each set of line items and funds interacts with and serves to support all of the others. This interconnected system helps us continue in our mission to be an open place for all to worship, grow, and serve.

We encourage you to click [HERE](#) to read more.

The culmination of *Our Money Story* will be Sunday, September 28 when we will pledge our financial resources to continue the mission and ministry of First Church into the coming year. Making a pledge each year allows us to be good stewards of our resources while building the upcoming year's budget. Your generosity will help us sustain and grow our reach in Birmingham and beyond. You are invited to return your pledge card by bringing it with you to worship on Sunday, September 28, mailing it to the church, or making your pledge online at any point during the month of September.

Click [HERE](#) to make your 2026 pledge now.



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

## **WEDNESDAY NIGHT DINNERS ARE BACK!**

We are preparing for the return of Wednesday Night Dinners on Wednesday, September 3! As a reminder, dinner will begin at 5:15pm with adult programming to follow at 6:15pm. The nursery will open at 5:30pm and children's and youth programming will begin at 6:00pm. You can find the menu and register for dinners [HERE](#).

As we kick off this fall we will begin a new round of small groups and we hope you will find a group that fits your interests. Click [HERE](#) to read detailed information about our offerings this fall and click [HERE](#) to register to participate.

# FALL SENIOR LUNCHEON

SEPTEMBER 11 AT 11:30AM

As fall begins, we want to gather with our senior members for lunch on THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11 AT 11:30AM in our Large Dining Room. In addition to sharing good food around the table, Patrick Evans, Caleb Clark, and Richard Byrd will join us to share in a time of music. If you are interested in attending, either because you are a senior congregant or because you love our seniors, Deana Solfronk will prepare our meal and the cost is \$10 per person.

CLICK [HERE](#) TO MAKE A RESERVATION.



You are invited to be a traveler on **The Journey**, a First Church retreat for men (or any who identify as masculine) at Camp McDowell on September 19–21, 2025. Gather with friends, some you haven't even met yet, as we study Jesus' celebrations of joy! The cost for the weekend is \$199 which includes your meals and accommodations (double occupancy rooms). The deadline to register is Wednesday, September 10.

Click [HERE](#) to learn more and register now.

O C T O B E R 3 - 4

# EMBODIED

EXPLORING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN BODY & SPIRIT

FOR MUCH OF CHRISTIAN HISTORY, WOMEN HAVE BEEN TAUGHT WHAT IS SACRED AND DIVINE IS LOCATED OUTSIDE OF OUR HUMAN BODIES AND MATERIAL EXISTENCE. WE HAVE BEEN PUSHED THROUGH CYCLES OF SHAME ABOUT HOW WE LOOK, HOW WE MOVE, AND WHO WE ARE. BUT WHAT IF THE OPPOSITE IS TRUE? WHAT IF BEING CONNECTED TO THE DIVINE REQUIRES BEING IN TOUCH WITH OUR BODIES AND EXPERIENCING THE HERE AND NOW IN ITS FULLNESS. OVER THE COURSE OF THE WEEKEND ALL FIRST CHURCH WOMEN AND FEMALE - IDENTIFYING PERSONS WILL BE INVITED TO EXPLORE WHAT IT MEANS TO LIVE AN EMBODIED LIFE THROUGH TEACHING, PRACTICE, AND SMALL GROUP REFLECTION. TOGETHER WE WILL LEAN INTO AND LEARN TO TRUST THE WISDOM OF OUR BODIES. CLICK [HERE](#) TO READ MORE AND CLICK [HERE](#) TO SIGN UP NOW.

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

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 2, 6:00PM**

If you have been visiting with us at First Church, have recently joined First Church, or are interested in learning more, you are invited to join us for a meal together around the table. We will gather at 6:00pm on Thursday, October 2 in the Large Dining Room for good food and fellowship. Childcare is available with a reservation made by Friday, September 26. Click [HERE](#) to learn more and register to join us.



This fall we will offer First Church 101 through a series of four different Sunday morning sessions during the Sunday School hour. From 9:45am – 10:45am on Sundays, October 5, 12, 19, and 26 we will gather in the Parlor to learn more about the United Methodist Church and First Church in particular. We are excited about this new opportunity to dive in and learn together. Click [HERE](#) to let us know you plan to attend.

# **GROUNDS WORK DAY**

## **& PLANT SPONSOR**

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18 AT 9:00AM**



**We need YOU....and your pressure washers, shovels, clippers, blowers, tarps, paint brushes and more! Our grounds need refreshing and this is your opportunity to be a part of the change. On Saturday, October 18 we will gather in Courtyard at 9:00am to remove old plants and shrubbery, clean our sidewalks and walkways, and give our grounds a much needed facelift. If you have a pressure washer you are willing to bring and operate or a pick-up truck, please notify Kathy Draper at [kathydraper1011@gmail.com](mailto:kathydraper1011@gmail.com) who is helping us to coordinate work on our church grounds.**

**Even if you are unable to make it on October 18, you have the opportunity to make a lasting impact on our church grounds by purchasing new plants (that were not included in our operating budget for this year) to fill our courtyard. These plants can be purchased as a gift to the church or can even be made in honor or memory of someone you love. Click [HERE](#) to make your donation now.**

Save  
the  
Date

TWENTY TWENTY SIX  
**CHURCH-WIDE  
RETREAT**

**FEBRUARY 13 - FEBRUARY 15, 2026**

Mark your calendars for our 2026 Churchwide Retreat! We will be returning to Camp McDowell from Friday, February 13 through Sunday, February 15, 2026 for our annual churchwide retreat. We are looking forward to sharing more information about our theme, schedule, and other details in the months to come. If you have any questions, please email [Katherine@firstchurchbhm.com](mailto:Katherine@firstchurchbhm.com).

**LIVE  STREAM**

**@ FIRST CHURCH BIRMINGHAM**

We are so excited to have our live stream fully launched this month! Help us share the good news with others who might be interested in watching our services online from home, while on vacation, or even for those who are seeking a church like ours but do not live in the area. You can access both the Loft and Sanctuary live streams from our [First Church YouTube page](#) at 11:00am every Sunday. As we continue to learn and make adjustments to this new technology, please be patient with us in these next few weeks and months.



# Blessing of The **STUFFED ANIMALS**

On **SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 28**, following worship, we invite our Pre-K through 5th grade children to bring their favorite stuffed animals for a Blessing of the Stuffed Animals. After the blessing, we will share pizza, enjoy time on the playground, and bounce on inflatables. Parents are asked to stay for the afternoon to enjoy fellowship, make connections, and have lunch as well. To help with our planning, we are asking all families to register ahead of time by clicking [HERE](#).

## City Kids **SUNDAY SCHOOL**

We are excited to share a fresh approach to City Kids Sunday School that will begin on Sunday, September 7. Over the course of the next year, our children will explore the *Manna and Mercy* curriculum for children beautifully written by our very own Hanna Schock. This engaging, imaginative work invites children into the big story of God's love and justice in a way that is both simple and deeply meaningful.

To better serve the needs of our students, we will have two Sunday School classrooms divided by age - Kindergarten through 2nd grade and 3rd through 5th grade. We hope you will join us as we consider the ways that the Bible is unified story pointing toward God's vision for the world - encouraging compassion, justice, and generosity.

# MDWK

This fall our Student Ministry and City Kids Ministry will gather separately on Wednesday nights for programming—but both will be focusing on the same exciting journey: learning about our church's six priorities. By exploring the same Scripture lessons each week, both groups will share a common foundation in God's Word, even as the teaching and activities are tailored to their age and stage of life. This MDWK series will highlight the following themes over the coming weeks:

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## WEEK 1 GOD'S BIG TABLE

EXPLORING GOD'S VISION OF WELCOME AND ABUNDANCE FOR ALL PEOPLE.

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## WEEK 2 JESUS EATS WITH EVERYONE

LEARNING ABOUT THE RADICAL HOSPITALITY OF JESUS.

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## WEEK 3 HELPING THE STRANGER

DISCOVERING THE BIBLICAL CALL TO KINDNESS AND COMPASSION FOR THOSE WE DON'T YET KNOW.

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## WEEK 4 A CHURCH THAT WELCOMES EVERYONE

CELEBRATING HOW WE CAN EMBODY GOD'S WELCOME AS A CHURCH FAMILY.

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**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 27**

# **PUTTER UP**



All First Church students are invited to join us for a Putter Up mini golf adventure on Saturday, September 27 from 3:30pm - 8:00pm. The cost for the evening is \$15 and will include a round of mini golf and a pizza dinner. Whether your student is a putting pro or simply in it for the laughs, this event is all about friendship, fun, and making unforgettable memories. Space is limited, so be sure to RSVP by September 14. Click [HERE](#) to sign up now.

# **SUNDAY NIGHT LIVE**

## **COMING THIS FALL**

Something exciting is happening for our youth this fall—Sunday Night Live will launch Sunday, September 7. From 5:00pm to 7:00pm, students will gather in the youth room for an evening packed with fun, connection, and purpose. Each week will feature a unique theme to keep things fresh and engaging as we rotate between Surprise Night, Connect Night, Serve Night, and Game Night. If you have a youth age student and would like more information, please reach out to Ashley Hess at [Ashley@firstchurchbhm.com](mailto:Ashley@firstchurchbhm.com).

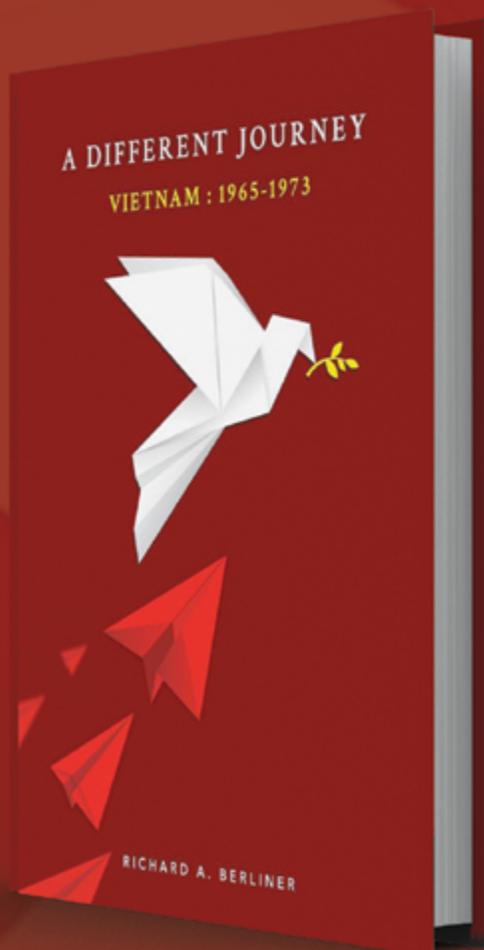
# SCAM

## EMAIL WARNING



**IN RECENT MONTHS** we have seen an uptick in email scams posing as members of the First Church staff. In order to help protect you from falling for one of these scams, please note the following about our emails:

1. First Church staff will never ask you for gift cards by email.
2. First Church staff will always use a standard signature at the bottom of our email which includes our title, preferred pronouns, and First Church address.
3. Emails that originate from First Church staff will always be in the following format `firstname@firstchurchbhm.com`. Even if the email lists one of our names in the top field, please be sure to click on that name and double check that the email is formatted with our first name only and our domain name of `firstchurchbhm.com`.



## A DIFFERENT JOURNEY

**VIETNAM: 1965 - 1973**

We are excited to share that another one of our church members is launching a book out into the world. Dick Berliner's new book entitled *A Different Journey - Vietnam: 1965-1973* tells the story of his experiences in Vietnam through the unique lens of his experiences with the non-government International Voluntary Service, the Committee of Responsibility, and the Dispatch News Service. A book launch is scheduled for September 9 at 6:30pm at Thank You Books. You can find more information about the book and its launch on [richardaberliner.com](http://richardaberliner.com).

# WELCOME



## AMBASSADORS

After a much needed renovation using funds from the Peggy West Estate, CAP Ambassadors have officially moved into the offices on the first floor of the Office Building. In a partnership with REV Birmingham, we have worked to provide a dedicated and updated work space. CAP Ambassadors are key to maintaining the cleanliness and safety of our city. By providing them with a central hub, we aim to enhance their efficiency and presence, contributing to a more welcoming downtown Birmingham for everyone.

CAP operating hours are Monday through Saturday from 7:00am through 11:30pm. On Sundays they operate from 7:00am to 3:30pm. We hope you will help us welcome CAP Ambassadors as you see them around downtown and throughout our campus.

# PRAYER TEAM INVITATION

In Philippians 4:6-7 we are given powerful words about prayer, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God." At First Church, we believe in the supporting love of prayer. One of the commitments we make to one another is that we will pray for our church family. If you would like to support your church family through the ministry of prayer, you are invited to sign up for the weekly prayer team email. You can do so by emailing Jonathan Goss at [Jonathan@firstchurchbhm.com](mailto:Jonathan@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](mailto:Peg@firstchurchbhm.com).

## FIRST CHURCH BIRMINGHAM **SUNDAY SCHEDULE**

9:45am

**SUNDAY SCHOOL**

11:00am

**LOFT & SANCTUARY IN PERSON WORSHIP**

11:00am

**LIVE STREAM**

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: Kevin Thomas .....	Kevin@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
Business Administrator: Steve Pitts .....	Steve@firstchurchbhm.com
Maintenance Supervisor: Coty Smith.....	Coty@firstchurchbhm.com
Wedding Director: Betsy Pate .....	Betsy@firstchurchbhm.com
Executive Director of Early Learning Center: Cassandra Copeland .....	ELC@firstchurchbhm.com
Nursery Coordinator: Natalie Bogart-Pierre .....	Natalie@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](http://www.firstchurchbhm.com)