

CONNECTIONS

DECEMBER 2025

HOPE

IN THE MIDST OF CHAOS



Every Advent, we light candles, sing carols, and pray for Christ's coming because we believe God entered a frightened world to bring good news. We hold onto hope because we believe that Christ did come—that's the promise of the season. Our hope is not flimsy or fleeting. It's gritty, resilient, and can endure—no matter what we fear or face. This Advent, let us insist on hope and trust that good news is greater than fear.

11.30 | In the Time of Herod, we Long for God to Break in
LAMENTATIONS 3:55-57, LUKE 1:5-13

12.7 | When We're Running out of Hope, God is at Work
ISAIAH 43:19-21, MATTHEW 11:1-11

12.14 | Even in our Fear, We Are Called Forward
JEREMIAH 1:4-10, LUKE 1:26-39

Combined worship in the Sanctuary

12.21 | When You're Afraid, Give Me Your Hand
ISAIAH 41:5-10, MATTHEW 1:18-25

12.24 | Good News is Louder than Fear
LUKE 2:1-20

12.28 | Service of Carols and Readings
Combined in the Sanctuary

1.4 | Epiphany - Fear Doesn't Stop Us
MATTHEW 2:1-12, 16-18



2025 Advent CALENDAR

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 30

11:00AM – FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT IN THE SANCTUARY & LOFT

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3

5:15PM – WEDNESDAY NIGHT DINNER

6:15PM – CHURCH-WIDE CAROLING

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7

11:00AM – SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT IN THE SANCTUARY & LOFT

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14

**11:00AM – THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT – COMBINED IN THE SANCTUARY
(WITH BISHOP JONATHAN HOLSTON)**

4:00PM – BEERS AND CAROLS AT MONDAY NIGHT BREWING

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21

11:00AM – FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT IN THE SANCTUARY & LOFT

6:00PM – LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE IN THE SANCTUARY

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24

4:00PM – CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE IN THE LOFT

6:00PM – CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE IN THE SANCTUARY

CHRISTMAS EVE FLOWERS

This Advent season you have the opportunity to remember or honor a loved one by purchasing a beautiful poinsettia to decorate our altar on Christmas Eve. You are invited to take your flower home with you at the conclusion of worship on Christmas Eve. Poinsettias are available for \$16 each. We will be taking orders until we run out or until the end of the day **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7.**

Click [HERE](#) to place your order now.

SENIOR ADVENT LUNCH

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17

AT 11:30AM IN THE LARGE DINING ROOM

We are inviting our senior members (and all who love them!) to an Advent Lunch on Wednesday, December 17 at 11:30am in hopes of getting to spend some quality time together during the holidays. If you are interested in attending our Senior Advent Lunch, either because you are a senior congregant or because you have missed seeing these friends too, then please click [HERE](#) to make a reservation or contact Peg Thompson in our Church Office at 205-254-3186. Deana Solfronk will prepare our meal and the cost is \$10 per person. In addition to good food, Patrick Evans will join us to lead holiday songs as we celebrate the season.



CHURCHWIDE ADVENT Event

W E D N E S D A Y , D E C E M B E R 3

Join us for a church-wide caroling event on Wednesday, December 3 following dinner. We will meet at the fountain entrance to Fairhaven (1424 Montclair Rd. Birmingham, 35210) at 6:30pm. While an RSVP for caroling is not needed, don't forget to make a dinner reservation if you plan to eat at the church.



COMBINED WORSHIP

W/ BISHOP JONATHAN HOLSTON
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14 AT 11:00AM IN THE SANCTUARY

On Sunday, December 14, we will have a combined worship service in the Sanctuary at 11:00am as we welcome Bishop Jonathan Holston to preach. Since arriving in North Alabama, our bishop has offered inspiring leadership to our Annual Conference, helping us move forward with a bold vision for United Methodism in our state. Bishop Holston is a highly gifted preacher, offering practical messages for our times. We are honored to host him in our pulpit and hope you will make plans to join us for this special Sunday.

MOVIE VIEWING PARTY:
THE POLAR EXPRESS

MONDAY, DECEMBER 22 AT 2:00PM IN THE LOFT

All aboard for some Christmas fun! Join us on Monday, December 22 from 2:00–4:30pm for a special viewing of The Polar Express in the Loft. Kids can come wearing their coziest Christmas pajamas and we'll have time before the movie for everyone to decorate their own Christmas cookie. During the film, enjoy hot chocolate and popcorn as we settle in for a festive afternoon together. Bring your family, invite friends, and come celebrate the joy and wonder of the season!

12.14.25

4:00PM

**BEERS AND
CAROLS**

**MONDAY NIGHT
BREWING**

We hope you are making plans to join us at **MONDAY NIGHT BREWING** (14 12th St S) on **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14** at **4:00PM** for our annual night of beers and carols! We'll be led in song by our church musicians in everyone's favorite Christmas carols and popular holiday songs. In addition to Monday Night's variety of brews, sodas, cocktails, and mocktails their kitchen will be open with a limited menu. An ugly Christmas sweater or festive outfit is encouraged but not required. All ages are welcome and we can't wait to see you there!

LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21
AT 6:00PM IN THE SANCTUARY

EACH YEAR FIRST CHURCH HOSTS A LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE TO LEAN INTO OUR PRIORITY OF AUTHENTICITY BY PROVIDING SACRED SPACE TO NAME OUR GRIEF AND SORROW. THIS YEAR WE WILL HOLD OUR SERVICE ON THE EVENING OF THE WINTER SOLSTICE ITSELF, THE LONGEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR. DURING OUR TIME TOGETHER WE WILL RECOGNIZE THAT OFTEN THE JOYS AND EXPECTATIONS OF CHRISTMAS OVERSHADOW THE PAIN, GRIEF, AND HURT THAT WE ARE EXPERIENCING IN OUR LIVES. IN ADDITION, THIS YEAR YOU ARE INVITED TO A SOLSTICE GATHERING AT THE CONCLUSION OF WORSHIP IF YOU CHOOSE. WE WILL JOIN TOGETHER AROUND THE WARMTH AND LIGHT OF A FIRE AND ENJOY WARM BEVERAGES AND TRADITIONAL SOLSTICE TREATS. CHILDCARE WILL BE AVAILABLE DURING THE SERVICE BUT CHILDREN ARE INVITED TO JOIN OUR GATHERING AFTER WORSHIP. WE HOPE YOU WILL COME AND JOIN US ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21 AS WE MARK THE LONGEST NIGHT OF YEAR AND REMEMBER THAT THE DARKNESS OF WINTER WILL NOT REMAIN FOREVER.

Christmas Eve

Candlelight Service

4:00PM IN THE LOFT
6:00PM IN THE SANCTUARY

First Church will offer two candlelight Christmas Eve services to provide ample opportunities to join together in worship as we celebrate Jesus' birth. At 4:00pm you are invited to attend a beautiful worship service in the Loft. There will be coffee, cookies, and snacks before the service begins. During the service there will be Christmas hymns and songs led by our band, holy communion, and candles to illuminate the space as we hold the mystery of Christ's birth. At 6:00pm you are invited to attend our traditional Sanctuary worship service led by organ and our choir where we will sing Christmas carols and hymns, receive holy communion at the altar, and light candles as we sing Silent Night. A nursery will be available during both services. Come to either service or, better yet, stay for both!



PROJECT 12.25

Each year Project 12/25 focuses on making the holidays more meaningful for our most vulnerable neighbors. This year we are excited to share that we are partnering with **THE ARC OF CENTRAL ALABAMA** in their “Gifts for All” initiative. Every year, The Arc works with individuals living in their residential housing, most of whom do not have families of their own, to gift them their wants and needs for the holidays.

We have adopted 30 individuals from The Arc this season. *Please have all gifts wrapped, labeled, and returned to the Chapel (bottom floor of the Office Building) by December 7.* To sign up to shop for an individual, please click **HERE**. If you’re unable to shop this year, we invite you to give generously and we will shop on your behalf. Click **HERE** and select the “Project 12/25” fund to donate.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6 FROM 4:30PM - 8:00PM

PARENT'S *Night Out*

We're excited to host another Parent's Night Out on Saturday, December 6 from 4:30pm - 8:00pm. Children ages 6 months through 5th grade are invited to spend the night enjoying festive activities including Christmas-themed games, a holiday craft, and a Christmas movie. A delicious dinner will also be provided for all participants. The cost is \$25 per child, making this a wonderful and affordable opportunity for parents to enjoy a night out whether that means spending time with friends, going on a date night, or catching up on holiday preparations. Please reach out to Ashley@firstchurchbhm.com if you have any questions. Click [HERE](#) to register now!

Christmas FAMILY BREAKFAST

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21 AT 9:45AM IN THE LARGE DINING ROOM

Parents of children from babies through 12th grade are invited to join us for a festive Christmas Family Breakfast on Sunday, December 21 at 9:45am in the Large Dining Room! We will have a delicious holiday breakfast from Deana Solfronk for everyone to enjoy.

This will be a great opportunity for parents to relax, enjoy good food, and have a much-needed morning off while we celebrate together. Bring the whole family and start your Christmas week with warmth, community, and a great breakfast!

YOUTH CHRISTMAS SCAVENGER HUNT

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13 AT 12:00PM

All 6th–12th graders are invited to meet at the Hoover Galleria food court at 12:00pm to grab lunch together (students will purchase their own meal). After lunch, teams will head out for a holiday scavenger hunt adventure at various nearby locations! A Safe Sanctuary–certified adult will be driving students to each destination as part of the fun and festive afternoon. We'll return to the Galleria food court for pick-up at 4:00pm. If you are interested in your student attending email Ashley Hess at Ashley@firstchurchbhm.com for more details or to sign up!

ADVENT DECORATIONS

SUNDAY, JANUARY 4 FOLLOWING WORSHIP

Please mark your calendars to stay following worship on Sunday, January 4 as we plan to take down all of our Advent decorations and safely store them to be used again next year.

Wednesday Night **DINNER & PROGRAMMING**

We are gearing up for another round of Wednesday Night Dinner and Programming beginning January 21, 2026. Our first three Wednesdays in 2026 will consist of three different trainings that we believe are important topics for us to better learn and understand in the coming year. On January 21 we will be led by Rachel Spates in a training on Hidden Disabilities to help spread awareness and offer tools for being in ministry and community with our neurodivergent population. On January 28 we will learn how to be Good Neighbors to gain a deeper understanding of our relationship with the unhoused community and offer practical ideas and tools on best practices led by Jackson Dean and REV Birmingham. Lastly, on February 4, we will be led by our ministry partner, One Place, in a training on Domestic Violence, which we are committed to holding regularly here at First Church as we continue to listen and learn. We hope you will make plans to attend one or all of these very timely and important trainings.

2026 CHURCHWIDE RETREAT

R&R

REST AND RESIST

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.

This retreat will offer us the opportunity to come together as a community and learn more about how we can move through these anxious times together. We will build connection and friendship through study, play, singing, and sharing together. The cost for the retreat is \$225 for individuals, \$425 for couples, and \$450 for families. Families in need of an extra room can reserve one for an additional \$100.

We are excited to share that we will begin offering payment plans this year for our retreat. When you sign up, feel free to select the amount that you would like to pay and at which frequency (\$100 a month, \$50 a month, etc). All registrations must be paid in full by February 1, 2026. For questions about registration or scholarship opportunities, please email Katherine@firstchurchbhm.com. A deposit of \$50 is due upon registration.

CLICK [HERE](#) TO REGISTER TODAY.

AS WE SEEK TO BE AN OPEN PLACE FOR ALL

MY PRAYER FOR FIRST CHURCH IS:

I pray for a tight knit loving Christian community. I pray that my service of the church benefits not only the church community but the outer local community.

- Alex Walls

I pray for my relationship in Christ to strengthen as I grow closer to members of the church. I pray God would use me where I am needed and that my membership is beneficial to First Church. I pray I am able to serve all who enter First Church and when I leave the door of the church the light of Christ remains within me.

- Reagen Dodson-Walls

In the spirit of John Wesley – or at least borrowing his words – my prayer for First Church is that we do all the good we can, by all the means we can, in all the ways we can, in all the places we can, at all times we can, to all the people we can, as long as we ever can.

- Kay Scharrer

To seek God and His will.

- Andrew Hughes

That we will continue to be welcoming of all humans despite individual characteristics that may be divisive in other congregations; that we will lead with love and seek to serve those in need.

- Diana Paulk



GIFTS RECEIVED BY THE CHURCH

TO COURTYARD RENOVATIONS

IN MEMORY OF BETTYE WALLACE & NANCY FLEMING
FROM ANDY WALLACE

TO THE MEMORIAL FUND

IN MEMORY OF SARAH JOLLY
FROM MATTHEW MCMILLAN

IN MEMORY OF MONTY HOGWOOD
FROM STANLEY WOODALL
FROM HAL & VIRGINIA FERRELL

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**

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