

# CONNECTIONS

FEBRUARY 2026



# CELEBRATING COMMUNITY

2026 CHURCHWIDE RETREAT

**R&R**

**REST AND RESIST**

Our annual church-wide retreat at Camp McDowell will take place Friday, February 13 through Sunday, February 15. We are looking forward to spending the weekend together learning, playing games, singing karaoke, worshipping, and taking time to rest and recharge. We ask for prayers for a safe journey to the retreat and a meaningful time away.

# WORSHIP CHANGE

ON FEBRUARY 15

Please note that there will not be any in-person or livestream worship services on Sunday, February 15 due to our Churchwide Retreat. If you are not able to join us at the retreat, we invite you to make space for rest in keeping with our Rest and Resist theme for this year. We look forward to seeing you back in worship on Sunday, February 22!



## KIDS SAY THE DARNDDEST THINGS

At First Church, one of our priorities is **EMBRACING TOUGH QUESTIONS**. So, in preparation for this January, we invited our kids to share their questions and they did not disappoint!

Our kids pay more attention than we think and they've been listening to our conversations about the mysteries of our faith. Their time in Sunday School, worship, and other children's activities has stirred their curiosity, and we think their questions matter—and they have some really good questions. "Where did God come from?" "How does God keep up with everything that's going on?" "What happened to the dinosaurs?" Their questions are shaping their faith, and, if we'll take the time to listen, their questions may shape our faith as well. This February First Church's City Kids are taking the lead and we'll see if they're able to stump the pastors along the way.

**2.1.26**  
**WAS CREATION  
REALLY SEVEN DAYS?**

*EXODUS 20:8-11, GENESIS 1*

**2.8.26**  
**WHAT HAPPENED  
TO THE DINOSAURS?**

*PSALM 104:24-26, GENESIS 1:24-31*



Jesus' words are easily distorted and sanitized in our modern world. Following Jesus leads to a richer, more expansive life, but it's not necessarily comfortable. Jesus' ministry can be described as "radical" which comes from the Latin word "radicalis," meaning "root" or "ground." Therefore, the good news should bring us back to our roots. Emulating Jesus and embodying his teachings should ground us in who God created us to be. Can we be "good news" people in a world too often burdened by bad news?

This Lent, let us remember that the good news really is good news. It is joyful—like fine wine saved for celebration. It grows like a mustard seed and smells like perfume poured from an alabaster jar. It tastes like bread passed endlessly through a hungry crowd. It sounds like laughter and feels like mercy. The good news is alive in the world. This Lent, let the teachings of Jesus lead us forward. May the good news inspire us to take action in a world desperate to hear, see, and taste what is good.

FEBRUARY 22  
**SO GOOD IT CATCHES  
US BY SURPRISE**  
*JOHN 2:1-11; MATTHEW 13:31-32*

MARCH 22  
**ROOTED IN JUSTICE,  
MERCY, & FAITHFULNESS**  
*JOHN 8:2-11; MATTHEW 23:23*

MARCH 1  
**GREAT LOVE FOR  
GOD & NEIGHBOR**  
*LUKE 7:36-50; MATTHEW 25:35-40*

MARCH 29  
**INSPIRING US TO ACT**  
*MARK 11:1-11*  
**PALM SUNDAY**

MARCH 8  
**TOGETHER,  
THE IMPOSSIBLE IS POSSIBLE**  
*MARK 6:32-44; EPHESIANS 3:20-21*

APRIL 5  
**ALIVE IN THE WORLD**  
*MATTHEW 28:1-10*  
**EASTER SUNDAY**

MARCH 15  
**PROTECTION & CARE  
FOR THE VULNERABLE**  
*MATTHEW 19:13-15; DEUTERONOMY 24:17-22*

# ASH

## W E D N E S D A Y

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18

12:00PM IN THE CHAPEL | 6:15PM IN THE SANCTUARY

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of the Lenten season. It is a time of worship marked by remembering our humanity and mortality. We recognize it is God's love that invites us 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 either at 12:00pm in the Chapel or at 6:15pm in the Sanctuary. If you plan to join us for the evening service, you are invited to join us for Wednesday night dinner starting at 5:15pm.

CLICK [HERE](#) TO MAKE YOUR DINNER RESERVATION.

## Wednesday Night **DINNER & PROGRAMMING**

On Wednesday, February 4, we will be led by our ministry partner, One Place, in a Domestic Violence Training in the Loft. On February 11 there will be no Wednesday Night Dinner and Programming as we will be busy preparing for our churchwide retreat.

Then, on Wednesday, February 18 we will have dinner followed by our evening Ash Wednesday service at 6:15pm in the Sanctuary. Our regular small groups will begin on Wednesday, February 22. You can read more about those options [HERE](#).

As a reminder, dinner begins at 5:15pm followed by programming at 6:15pm. The nursery opens at 5:45pm and programming for children will begin at 6:00pm. Dinner reservations are due every week by Monday at noon. After that deadline, we are unable to issue refunds or move reservations. You can sign up for dinners [HERE](#) and sign up for our spring small group offerings [HERE](#).

# Getting To KNOW US Dinner

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 6:00PM**

If you have been visiting with us at First Church, have recently joined, 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, February 5 in the Large Dining Room for good food and fellowship. Childcare is available with a reservation made by Friday, January 30. Click [HERE](#) to learn more and register to join us



**FIRST  
CHURCH 101**

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22 – SUNDAY, MARCH 15

As we enter a new year we will offer another First Church 101 series on four consecutive Sunday morning sessions during the Sunday School hour. From 9:45am – 10:45am we will gather in the Parlor to learn more about the United Methodist Church and First Church in particular. We are excited about this opportunity to dive in and learn together. You are welcome to pick one topic to come and learn more or to join us for all four weeks. Here is the list of weeks and topics that will be covered:

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22  
**UNITED METHODIST THEOLOGY & POLITY**

SUNDAY, MARCH 1  
**WAYS TO GET PLUGGED IN**

SUNDAY, MARCH 8  
**FIRST CHURCH TOUR**

SUNDAY, MARCH 15  
**FIRST CHURCH & MEMBERSHIP**

Please click [HERE](#) to let us know you plan to attend.

*While registration is not required, it will help us make sure we have enough snacks and coffee.*

first  
**CHURCH**  
BIRMINGHAM



**GREETER**

**NEW**

# NAME TAG ORDER

One of the ways we have been practicing hospitality in recent years has been to encourage everyone to purchase and regularly wear a name tag. As we move toward Easter, we are preparing to place another order. So, if you are new to First Church, if you have lost your name tag, or if you need a second (or third!) name tag, we will be taking orders until Sunday, March 1. Name tags are \$10 each which covers the cost of printing and shipping.

Click [HERE](#) to order yours now.

# PANAMA LEARN AND SERVE EXPERIENCE

**SATURDAY, JUNE 27 - SUNDAY, JULY 5**

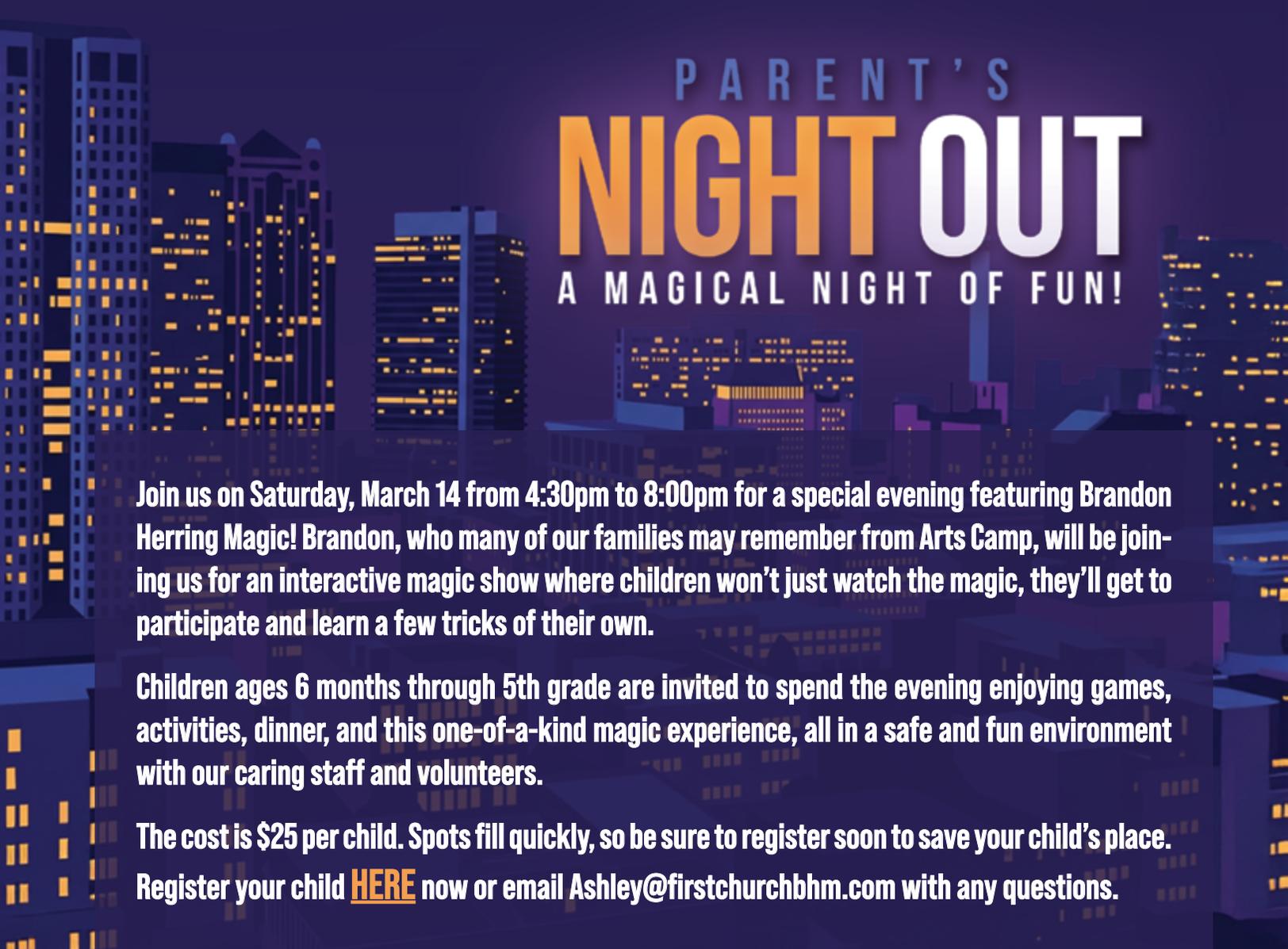
We are thrilled to have the opportunity to return to Panama in 2026 and we are now beginning to build our team. Panama is a beautiful country, with even greater beauty in its people. First Church has been deeply connected to Panama and the people there for over 15 years. Our connection is through United Methodist missionary, Rhett Thompson, who has served in Panama for over 35 years. Rhett has connected us with people in Panama whom we now know by name. It is through these connections that many folks here at First Church have had life-changing experiences in Panama. Click [HERE](#) to read more and sign up now.



# ACOLYTES & CRUCIFERS

One of the most meaningful ways our children can be a part of Sunday morning worship in the Sanctuary is by serving as Acolytes and Crucifers. These roles help lead the congregation into worship and allow our kids to be visible, confident leaders.

As we begin a new year, Renee Driskel has offered to train all interested kids, giving them the skills and confidence they need to serve well and feel proud of their role. This opportunity is a beautiful way for our kids to grow in faith and leadership. If you'd like your child to serve, email [Ashley@firstchurchbhm.com](mailto:Ashley@firstchurchbhm.com)



## PARENT'S NIGHT OUT

A MAGICAL NIGHT OF FUN!

Join us on Saturday, March 14 from 4:30pm to 8:00pm for a special evening featuring Brandon Herring Magic! Brandon, who many of our families may remember from Arts Camp, will be joining us for an interactive magic show where children won't just watch the magic, they'll get to participate and learn a few tricks of their own.

Children ages 6 months through 5th grade are invited to spend the evening enjoying games, activities, dinner, and this one-of-a-kind magic experience, all in a safe and fun environment with our caring staff and volunteers.

The cost is \$25 per child. Spots fill quickly, so be sure to register soon to save your child's place. Register your child [HERE](#) now or email [Ashley@firstchurchbhm.com](mailto:Ashley@firstchurchbhm.com) with any questions.

# Youth SUMMER Trip

Our Youth Ministry will be heading to Atlanta from June 15–17 for three days packed with fun, friendship, and big-time experiences. Students will enjoy a high-energy lineup that includes: Six Flags Over Georgia, Beat the Bomb Atlanta, An Atlanta Braves game, and plenty of time to hang out, laugh, and make memories with friends.

This trip is designed to be both a blast and a chance for our students to deepen their relationships with one another and their church community as we travel, play, and explore together. The cost is \$175 per student, which covers all activities, breakfast, and one dinner. More details about lodging, transportation, and registration will be shared soon, but for now we encourage families to save these dates.

## COUNSELORS IN TRAINING

NEEDED SUMMER 2026

We are excited to invite our youth to be part of something meaningful and fun this summer by serving as Counselors in Training (CITs) for two of our biggest children's events of the year.

Creation Camp will take place June 1–4 and Arts Camp will be held July 13–16. These camps bring together dozens of children for days filled with creativity, faith, friendship, and discovery — and they are even better when our youth step in to lead alongside our adult volunteers.

Counselors in Training will help provide guidance, leadership, and lots of fun for our younger kids by assisting with small groups, games, crafts, and activities. It's a wonderful opportunity for students to grow in confidence, responsibility, and connection to our church community while making a real difference in the lives of children. If you have a youth who would be interested in being part of this program this summer, please reach out to [Ashley@firstchurchbhm.com](mailto:Ashley@firstchurchbhm.com) to learn more and get signed up.

# COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP

The Finance Team has created a process for First Church college students to apply for and access funds available to help those attending 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 February 15, 2026 and award recipients will be notified by mid-March. Click [HERE](#) to apply now.



You are invited to join our partners at Church of the Reconciler for a Chili Cook Off fundraiser on Friday, February 27 from 11:00am – 1:00pm. Tickets are \$25 each and can be purchased [HERE](#). The cost of your ticket covers both you and one of Church of the Reconciler's members who are financially vulnerable. Your ticket stub will also allow you one vote for your favorite chili – additional donations will offer more votes for your favorite. Come celebrate community and help one of our vital ministry partners raise funds to continue their work.



# UPDATE YOUR **CONTACT** **INFORMATION**

We know a lot can change over time. 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
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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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