



CONNECTIONS

MAY 2026

SEEKING WONDER



Elemental

FINDING AWE & WONDER IN OUR WORLD

We are living in the midst of anxious times. The news is filled with stories of turmoil and change that bring a sense of heaviness and grief to our daily lives. In times of difficulty and heartache, looking to nature can bring back a sense of lightness and hope. For the next four weeks, we will look to the elements - earth, air, fire, and water - to ground ourselves in the gifts of the world around us. By seeking enchantment and wonder, we will find ways to navigate these anxious times with a sense of joy and hope. Using Katherine May's book *Enchantment: Awakening Wonder in an Anxious Age* as a guide, we will seek to recapture wonder and explore what nature can teach us.

SUNDAY, MAY 10



Earth

Genesis 1:11-13, 24-25, Job 12:7-10

SUNDAY, MAY 17



Air

Genesis 1:1-2, Ezekiel 37, John 3:8

SUNDAY, MAY 24



Fire

Exodus 3:1-10, Acts 2:1-4
Combined in The Loft

SUNDAY, MAY 31



Water

Genesis 1:20-23, Psalm 104:10-18

Graduation SUNDAY SUNDAY, MAY 10

GRADUATION SEASON is here and we are excited to honor our graduates in 2026! On Sunday, May 10, we'll take time during worship in both the Loft and Sanctuary to celebrate our graduates and their families. We invite anyone graduating from high school, college, a master's program, or a doctoral program to be included in this recognition. As a church community, we want to celebrate these important accomplishments and give thanks for the dedication and learning that have marked each graduate's journey.

MEMORIAL DAY COMBINED WORSHIP SUNDAY, MAY 24 IN THE LOFT

You are invited to combined worship in the Loft on Sunday, May 24 as we come together over Memorial Day weekend. We will continue in our sermon series *Elemental* by looking at the theme of "fire" as we also celebrate Pentecost Sunday. You are invited to arrive early in the Loft lounge area to enjoy the wonderful hospitality of our Coffee Team and partake in coffee, hot tea, and delicious snacks. We hope to see you on Memorial Day weekend in the Loft at 11:00am.

Welcome REA GREEN

First Church is excited to welcome Rev. Rea Green as the newest member of our staff. Rea received her bachelor's degree from Birmingham Southern College and graduates this month from Vanderbilt Divinity School with a Master of Divinity. She will begin serving as an Associate Pastor at First Church on July 1. Her position is entirely funded by the North Alabama Conference as part of an initiative to place promising young pastors in healthy churches. With time spent serving at Church of the Reconciler and West End United Methodist Church in Nashville, she brings valuable experience in Justice and Mercy Ministries as well as Accessibility Ministries. As a gifted speaker, she will also add a valuable voice to our worship services. When she's not working, Rea loves to read, go to concerts, explore new coffee shops with her guide dog, Xyrus, and she has recently taken on rock climbing. It is our joy to welcome Rea to the team!





Double YOUR **IMPACT**

FIRST CHURCH MATCHING GRANT CAMPAIGN

When we passed our 2026 budget, we did so with a projected deficit of \$133,510. In response, a generous donor has offered the opportunity to match up to \$67,000 and balance our budget for the coming year. We began the campaign on Easter Sunday, April 5 and will continue for six weeks through Sunday, May 10. Every gift given beyond your 2026 pledge will be matched dollar for dollar. This is a wonderful opportunity to magnify the impact of your generosity in the coming year. As of the end of April we are at 70% of our goal. Click [HERE](#) and select the “Double Your Impact” fund to make your gift now.



First Church

SUMMER

BOOK CLUB



This summer we are looking forward to trying something new by hosting a monthly book club while we are on a break from our regular Wednesday Night Programming. Join us on the 2nd Wednesday nights of the month – June 10, July 8, and August 12 – at 6:00pm in the Parlor for a time to come together and talk about books we love. Because we know that some of you might like to read ahead, we are sharing the books now so that all you book-lovers can get a head start before summer arrives.

JUNE 10

The Parable of the Sower

BY OCTAVIA BUTLER

JULY 8

Remarkably Bright Creatures

BY SHELBY VAN PELT

AUGUST 12

Theo of Golden

BY ALAN LEVI

We would love to know you're coming so click [HERE](#) to sign up now.



FRIDAY, AUGUST 14 - SUNDAY, AUGUST 16

MANNA & MERCY RETREAT



Manna and Mercy is the theological foundation for our mission statement and six priorities at First Church. It undergirds everything we do. During this weekend, we will journey through the whole Bible— from Genesis to Revelation – using Daniel Erlander’s book Manna and Mercy as our guide.

Over the course of the retreat, we will:

- Learn how the original context shapes the meaning of Scripture
- Read the Bible through the lens of Jesus’ life, teaching, death, and resurrection
- Learn that we value inclusivity and social justice not in spite of the Bible but because of it
- Be challenged to live in a way that brings life to ourselves, our families, & to the whole world
- Live into our identities as God’s children created in love, by love, and for love

This retreat will take place in the Loft at First Church August 14 - 16 and will be led by our First Church pastoral staff. The cost is \$75 which covers your Manna and Mercy book, lunch on both Saturday and Sunday, as well as snacks and coffee throughout the weekend. We will begin on Friday evening, August 14 with Session 1 and then reconvene on Saturday, August 15 from approximately 9:00am – 5:00pm with Sessions 2 and 3, and conclude on Sunday, August 16 with lunch after worship and Session 4 from approximately 1:00pm – 2:30pm.

Click **HERE** to register to join us.

PRIDE SIGN MAKING

TUESDAY, JUNE 9 | 5:30PM

AT MONDAY NIGHT BREWING

Mark your calendars now to join us at Monday Night Brewing on Tuesday, June 9 at 5:30pm for an evening of creativity, community, and celebration as we gear up for the Pride Parade. Bring your own supplies – posters, markers, glitter, and anything else you'd like – and get ready to create something fabulous. We can't wait to see you there!

SATURDAY, JUNE 13

Pride PARADE '26

THIS YEAR, CENTRAL ALABAMA PRIDE IS CELEBRATING 48 YEARS OF PRIDE IN THE MAGIC CITY! THE PRIDE PARADE AND PRIDEFEST ARE BACK IN FULL SWING THIS YEAR AND WE HOPE YOU'LL MAKE PLANS TO JOIN US.

[CLICK HERE](#) FOR MORE INFORMATION.

PRIDE FEST '26

6.14.26

IN ADDITION TO PARTICIPATING IN THE PARADE, WE WILL HAVE A BOOTH AT PRIDEFEST ON SUNDAY, JUNE 14 WHICH BEGINS AT 12:00PM AT LINN PARK.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION.](#)

GET YOUR PRIDE SWAG!

*NEED SOME FRESH
SWAG FOR PRIDE?*

ORDER FROM OUR [REDBUBBLE SHOP](#)
FOR ANYTHING YOUR HEART DESIRES!



CHURCH-WIDE

POOL PARTY

SATURDAY, JUNE 6 | 6:15PM

AT WEST HOMEWOOD PATRIOT POOL

Join us for a fun and relaxing evening at our Church-Wide Pool Party on Friday, June 6 from 6:15pm to 8:15pm at West Patriot Pool (800 Oak Grove Rd, Homewood, AL 35209). Whether you want to swim, sit poolside and visit with friends, or simply enjoy a sweet treat, there's something for everyone. We'll have desserts to share, plenty of space to relax, and lots of time for fellowship. All are welcome—families, individuals, kids, youth, and adults alike. Best of all, this is a free event. Bring a towel, invite a friend, and come enjoy a great evening with your church community. We can't wait to see you there!

MONDAY, JUNE 1 - THURSDAY, JUNE 4



Designed for children who have completed kindergarten through fifth grade, Creation Camp is a First Church spin on Gross Out Camp that we have participated in over the past several years. It will keep the same fun, hands-on spirit with a renewed focus on creation care, curiosity, and outdoor learning.

Creation Camp will run daily June 1-4 from 8:30am – 4:00pm with transportation provided from the church. Ashley along with Hanna and Bill Schock will lead outdoor creek experiences and teaching experiments. The kids will spend their days exploring the outdoors, getting muddy, asking big questions, and learning how humans can help care for God's creation.

The cost for the week is \$130 and will include water, a camp t-shirt, and an afternoon snack. Children will need to bring a sack lunch and morning snack each day. Click [HERE](#) to register your child now. If you have any questions, please reach out to Ashley@firstchurchbhm.com.



Arts Camp will take place **MONDAY, JULY 13 - FRIDAY, JULY 17** from 9:00am – 1:00pm. We are returning to a five-day format so kids can dive even deeper into the creative process. Lunch will be served daily so campers can refuel before jumping back into the fun. Arts Camp is open to children who have completed 4K through teens.

Our theme is “The Creation Project.” For one week, our church will transform into a working production lot—First Church Studios—where creativity, collaboration, and imagination take center stage. Throughout the week, children will have the opportunity to explore theater, dance, visual art, and video, learning what it takes to bring a production to life. Whether your child loves being on stage, prefers creating behind the scenes, enjoys painting and designing, or is curious about storytelling through film, there will be a place for them to shine.

Campers will work together, learn new skills, and discover new ways to express their creativity. Along the way, we’ll reflect on how God’s very first creative project—a garden—reminds us that beautiful things grow through diversity, collaboration, and care. The week will build toward a special celebration where families can see what the children have created together.

The cost for the week is \$85 with an additional \$40 for optional aftercare which will run from 1:00pm – 4:00pm each day. **REGISTRATION** is now open. We encourage families to sign up early so your child doesn’t miss out on this creative, laughter-filled week.

Youth SUMMER MER Trip

Our youth are headed out for an unforgettable summer adventure June 15–17. Students will meet at the church at 8:00am to kick off a high-energy trip packed with fun, connection, and memory-making experiences.

This trip includes a visit to Six Flags, Beat the Bomb Atlanta, and an Atlanta Braves game. The cost for the trip is \$175, which includes some of our meals along the way. Spots are limited to 20 total participants (students and adults) and will be filled on a first-come, first-serve basis. Click [HERE](#) to register now.



GET READY

for one of the best weeks of the summer — our Youth Summer Trip is just around the corner on July 20–23! This year we’re heading to YMCA Camp Chandler in Wetumpka, Alabama, and we’re inviting all rising 6th through 12th graders to come along for an unforgettable adventure. Throughout the week, youth will jump into classic camp activities on the water and around camp, build friendships, and compete in team challenges that will keep the energy high. Expect plenty of laughter, late-night conversations, and the kind of moments that turn into stories our youth will tell for years.

One of the highlights of the trip will be a full day at Montgomery Whitewater, where students will experience the thrill of whitewater rafting together.

The cost of the trip is \$150 and includes all meals, whitewater rafting, and all lake activities for the week. Click [HERE](#) to sign up now. Please contact Ashley@firstchurchbhm.com for any questions.

FIRST CHURCH BIRMINGHAM

JUSTICE & MERCY

Did you know that First Church has 10 different ministry partners? You can read more about all of our partners [HERE](#) or find it anytime on our website by clicking the Ministries tab and scrolling down to Justice and Mercy. Please reach out to our liaisons if you have any questions at all about getting involved in the important work of our partners.

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**THIS MONTH WE WANT TO HIGHLIGHT
UPCOMING NEEDS FROM TWO OF OUR PARTNERS:**

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WEST END COMMUNITY CHURCH

The WE Learn Program is on the hunt for amazing people to help with their summer learning program! Students who range from rising first graders through fifth grade come to Urban Ministry Monday through Thursday from 8:00am - 3:00pm and do all kinds of fun activities from crafts to trips to the pool, libraries, the zoo, museums, and more! Most volunteers come for half the day once or twice a week. If you or someone you know might be interested, please let me know: mjjessee@uab.edu or (205) 470-4339, and I will connect you with Caitlin Harper, Pastor of WECC.

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MAGIC CITY ACCEPTANCE CENTER (MCAC)

First Church provides coffee and donuts for MCAC's "Space to Be Me," a support group for families with trans and gender expansive children ages 12 and under called that meets every third Saturday of the month. The cost is approximately \$45-\$50. To sign up click [HERE](#). If you have questions, direct them to Jordan Pittman at jordangpittman@gmail.com.

MY PRAYER FOR FIRST CHURCH IS:

We find and grow in our authentic expressions of love individually and communally

- *H.N. Gibson*

That the table continues to be crowded.

- *Maggie Gibson*

That we would be a beacon of hope to those who have been hurt, overlooked, or disregarded, that in letting our light shine the love of Christ, we would create a tangible ripple of change in a world that is hurting and scared.

- *Heather Roland*

That we continue to welcome everyone unconditionally and become more like Christ in doing so.

- *Kevin Roland*

That we all reach out – literally – to our neighbors all over the city, state, country, and world, and provide help within their cultural heritage, not ours; that we spread love and joy and peace to all.

- *Lenny Ferguson*

I pray that First Church continues to be an inclusive space, showing the love of God to the church and the Birmingham community as a whole.

- *Tara McGlocklin*

We pray that we continue to love without judgement, welcome without hesitation, and serve with compassion.

- *Amber Hall and Ashley Belding-Hall*

That the church continues to have the financial means and willing volunteers to continue the good work started in the Birmingham community and that all people can find community and love within the walls of First Church.

- *Megan and Chris Humphries*

To remain loving and accepting of all.

- *Curt Gray*

I pray that we will be filled with and guided by the Holy Spirit and that the fruits and gifts of the spirit would be evident in our lives.

- *Jerri Edwards*

I pray that every member and visitor feels welcomed, valued, and loved each time they walk through the doors.

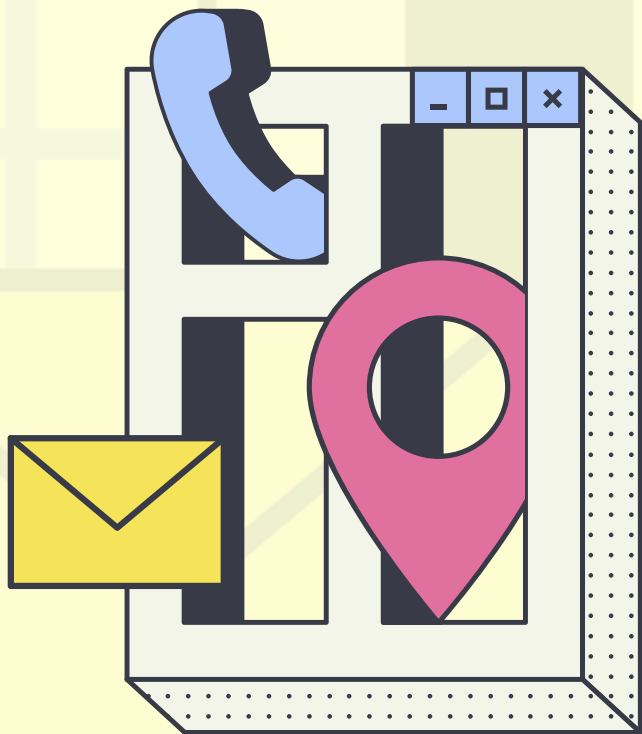
- *Lucie Pradat*



UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION FORM

FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH

We are so grateful for each and every child and student who is part of our church family. In order to care for them well and create a safe, welcoming, and supportive environment, we are asking all families to take a few moments to complete our updated **CHILDREN & YOUTH INFORMATION FORM**. This form helps us celebrate your children in meaningful ways, like recognizing birthdays, while also equipping our team with important details such as allergies, accessibility needs, and any behavioral or developmental information that will help us support your child with care and intention. Thank you for partnering with us in this important work.



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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