

CONNECTIONS

JULY 2026



CELEBRATING OUR KIDS

ARTS CAMP CELEBRATION

SUNDAY, JULY 19 | IN THE LOFT

Join us in the Loft on Sunday, July 19 during the 11:00am worship service for a special Arts Camp Celebration! We'll be highlighting all the creativity, joy, and energy from a fantastic week of Arts Camp—complete with music, art, and stories from our campers. We hope you will make a special effort to join us as our children lead us in worship on this special Sunday.





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.

COMBINED SUNDAY SCHOOL

Join us for combined Sunday School classes in July, as we hear from several notable authors in our very own congregation! We are excited to learn from these individuals and support the stories they have to share. We will gather in the Large Dining Room at 9:45am (with the exception of Sunday, July 12 when we will meet in the Loft). Coffee and snacks will be available each week.

JULY
5

REV. KEVIN THOMAS

THE IMMORAL CHRISTIAN

JULY
12

RENEE HARMON

LIFE HIKE:

Walking Through Loss to What Comes After

JULY
19

DICK BERLINER

A DIFFERENT JOURNEY:

Vietnam 1965-1973

JULY
26

BARRY COLE

ONE HUNDRED PEARLS



This summer we're heading to the movies! Join us for worship in July for Summer at the Movies, a fun and meaningful sermon series where we'll explore powerful themes from some of our favorite films and connect them to our faith journey. Whether you're a movie lover or just curious, there's a seat for you. Grab a friend and come experience the stories of cinema that inspire, challenge, and remind us of who we are called to be.

7.5 | BARBIE

GENESIS 3:1-7, PSALM 139

Combined in the Sanctuary – Katie Gilbert preaching

7.12 | K-POP DEMON HUNTERS

MATTHEW 22:34-40

Combined in the Sanctuary – Rea Green preaching

7.19 | FERNGULLY: THE LAST RAINFOREST

GENESIS 1 & PSALM 104

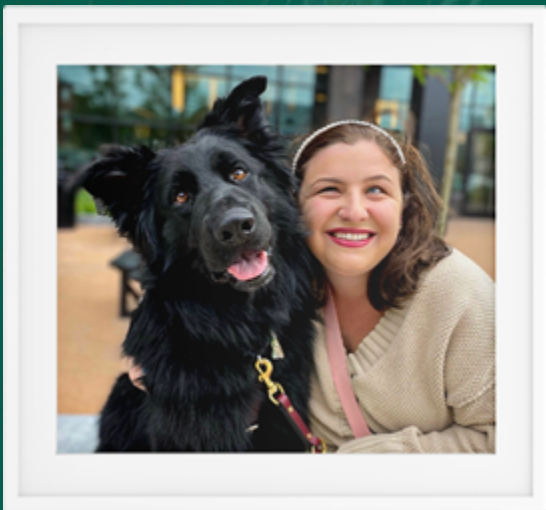
Combined in the Loft – Jonathan Goss preaching

7.26 | SISTER ACT

MATTHEW 5:14-16

Combined in the Loft – Kevin Thomas preaching

Welcome REA GREEN



First Church is excited to welcome Rev. Rea Green as the newest member of our staff this month. Rea received her bachelor's degree from Birmingham Southern College and a Master of Divinity from Vanderbilt Divinity School. She will begin serving as an Associate Pastor on Wednesday, 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 has recently taken on rock climbing.

Rea will preach in the combined Sanctuary worship service on Sunday, July 12. Immediately following the service, we will have a reception in her honor in the Large Dining Room. Let's welcome her with the love, joy, and grace that define our church family!



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.

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.



Have YOU been
MISSING US
on Wednesday
Nights?

BACK FORTY
Hangout

Join us for a church-wide dinner and hangout at Back Forty Beer Company (3201 1st Ave N, Birmingham, AL 35222) on Wednesday, July 22 as we catch up amidst a busy summer season! We'll plan to meet at 6:15pm and share a meal together. Back Forty has a wide selection of food and drinks which you can view on their **WEBSITE** ahead of time. All ages are welcome!



SUNDAY, AUGUST 2
BLESSING *of the*
BACK
PACKS

On Sunday, August 2, we invite all students, teachers, administrators, and others involved in education to join us during worship in both the Loft and Sanctuary for a meaningful time of blessing for the year ahead. We invite you to bring your backpacks, briefcases, or any other symbol of your educational journey to place on the altar as we pray for the upcoming school year. Whether you are starting a new journey in elementary school, venturing into college life, or guiding students as educators and administrators, this service will celebrate you. Let's start the new school year with hope, positivity, and the shared support of our church family.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 2 AFTER WORSHIP

FALL KICKOFF

AT  **UP —
DOWN**

Join us for a church-wide Fall Kickoff at Up-Down Arcade Bar on Sunday, August 2! What's better than kicking off a new fall season with pizza, games, and fellowship? Not much! We invite you to head to Up-Down (113 13th St. S) after worship. This location utilizes street parking, so we encourage you to carpool as you are able. First Church will cover two slices of pizza per individual as well as 20 tokens per family unit/individual — after that, drinks, extra food, and bonus tokens are on you! Although this is a free event, we need a headcount in order to give Up-Down's kitchen an accurate number for pizzas. For questions, please reach out to Katherine at Katherine@firstchurchbhm.com.

PLEASE REGISTER BY SUNDAY, JULY 26.

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.

RECRUITING WELCOME GUIDES

This August, we mark two years with our Welcome Guides who have been present rain or shine to greet and guide visitors and members alike. Their presence has made a huge difference in the hospitality that First Church provides throughout our campus on Sunday mornings. Welcome Guides serve on a rotating basis with the request to be present as a guide one Sunday a month over the next year. We will hold a training in early August to help equip and prepare you for this important role that helps to put our priority of hospitality into action. If you are interested in serving as a Welcome Guide for the upcoming year, please reach out to Dallas Vice at dallasvice@gmail.com to learn more.

ACADEMY FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION

"WHAT MAKES YOU
COME ALIVE?"

This fall the Academy for Spiritual Formation is hosting a 4-day opportunity from October 5-9 at Camp Sumatanga. This year's theme is *Alive with Christ* and the speakers will be Dr. Luther Smith and Nathan and Vivianne Foster. We will explore Howard Thurman's question: "What makes you come alive?" Click [HERE](#) to read more and register now.

Please reach out to Hanna Schock at hannaschock@bellsouth.net for questions.

T W E N T Y - T W E N T Y S I X

SIDEWALK

F I L M F E S T I V A L

Each year First Church partners with Sidewalk Film Festival to screen movies in our Loft worship space. This is an opportunity to share our love and hospitality with thousands of people who come to the Festival over the course of the weekend. One of the ways we do this is by providing concessions for purchase (just like visiting any of the other venues who host around town!).

The Sidewalk Film Festival will be in our space from Friday, August 28 through Sunday, August 30. We will be selling concessions on Saturday and Sunday with volunteer shifts lasting approximately two hours each. If you are willing to help show our hospitality by selling concessions and welcoming folks into our space, please reach out to Katie at Katie@firstchurchbhm.com.

This year we are also planning to bring back our Love Rally – an opportunity to share our message of love and inclusion and extend our hospitality outside of our walls. Look for more information in the coming weeks about a Love Rally on Saturday, August 29 and help show our love to downtown Birmingham.

New!

ART

in the

OFFICE BUILDING



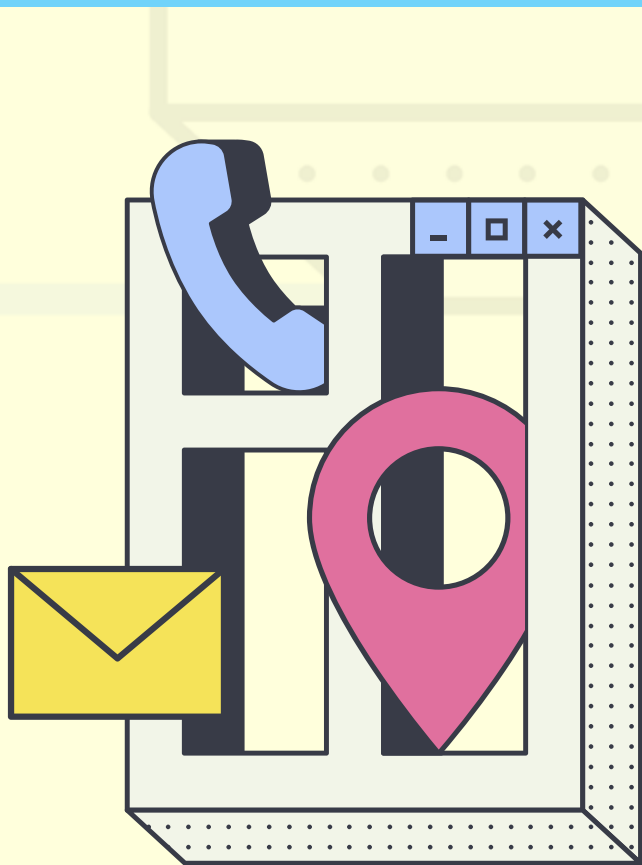
If you've not had a chance to enjoy new art at First Church, we invite you to visit the area between the Chapel and Parlor to see a commissioned work by Caleb Clark. Painted in honor and memory of Truman and Jean Malone, the watercolors blend with the chapel's stained glass and the wooden frame mirrors the old of the parlor. The painting captures a church, rooted in United Methodist tradition, that is vibrantly relevant in the heart of downtown. The colors reflect the rich variety of the church family.

Truman and Jean were long-time leaders of the church and Caleb captures them in the foreground, sitting in their usual pew. Below the pipe organ, a choir member in blue represents Truman, who loved the choir and its music. A figure near the altar is Jean, at five years old, when she unexpectedly greeted the Bishop. The crimson flowers and the Methodist flame on the parament beautifully frame this beloved space. We hope you will stop by and see it for yourself!



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.



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.

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.

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
Associate Pastor: REA GREEN	Rea@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



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

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