

# CONNECTIONS

AUGUST 2026

EMBRACING  
THE FALL



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**

**As a reminder, we are gathering at Up-Down Arcade Bar (113 13th St. S) after worship on Sunday, August 2 for a church-wide Fall Kickoff! What's better than starting a new fall season with pizza, games, and fellowship? Not much! Although registration for complimentary tokens and pizza has closed, we hope you'll still swing by and join us for the fun! This location utilizes street parking, so we encourage you to carpool as you are able. Please email [Katherine@firstchurchbhm.com](mailto:Katherine@firstchurchbhm.com) with any questions.**



AUGUST SERMON SERIES

# CURVEBALL

Western evangelical Christianity has largely been defined by what appear to be simple, direct, and easy pathways to heaven, things like the Roman Road and the ABC's of faith. But sooner or later, those easy recipes fail us. Life throws us a curveball to which the Roman Road doesn't know how to respond. Our lives are too complicated for simplistic faith formulas. Guided by Pete Enns book Curveball, we will take life's curveballs seriously by asking questions like: What are we to do with contradictions in scripture? What about people who have never heard of Jesus or lived before our story began? How should our faith adjust to new realities? How do we imagine a God big enough to create our universe? What do we do when God is unpredictable? We hope you'll join us as together we embrace some of the tough questions of our faith.

8.2.26

## I Love You, Bible—Just Not 'That' Way

*2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17, PROVERBS 26:4-5*

8.9.26

## The Other 99 Percent

*JOHN 14:1-6, ACTS 4:12*

8.16.26

## Adjusting for Jesus

*MATTHEW 5:17-18, GALATIANS 3:10-14*

8.23.26

## A Cosmic Curveball

*GENESIS 1:14-19*

8.30.26

## A Quantum Curveball

*1 CORINTHIANS 3:18-20*

# COFFEE WITH THE PASTORS

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 23 AT 9:45AM IN THE LARGE DINING ROOM**

If you have been visiting with us at First Church in recent weeks or months, we want to invite you to join us for Coffee with the Pastors on Sunday, August 23 at 9:45am in the Large Dining Room. This will be an informal time to gather with the pastors and a handful of members from First Church to get to know one another, to ask any questions you might have, and to find points of connection. We encourage you to let us know you are coming by submitting your RSVP [HERE](#).

## SUNDAY MORNING SOCIAL

**SUNDAYS AT 9:45AM - 10:45AM**

This fall we are launching a new opportunity for building community on Sunday mornings. If you have been interested in meeting new people and deepening your relationship at First Church but don't want to attend a traditional Sunday School Class, this opportunity is for you. We will gather each week beginning on Sunday, August 2 in the Large Dining Room at 9:45am for coffee and casual conversations. We hope this will offer space for anyone who is seeking a non-traditional way to connect more deeply at First Church on Sunday mornings.

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.



t w e n t y - t w e n t y   s i x

# SIDE WALK

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](mailto: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.**

# Wednesday Night **DINNER & PROGRAMMING**

**WE ARE SO EXCITED** about Wednesday Nights starting back that we are hosting our first dinner on September 9 free of charge! Registration is still required for this meal but we hope you'll join us as we kick off a new season. Please **SIGN UP** by Monday, September 7 at 12:00pm. As a reminder, dinner begins at 5:15pm and is followed by programming at 6:15pm. You can sign up for the remaining dinners through the fall **HERE**.

In addition to our ongoing groups, we'll be kicking off September with two new short-term small groups. You can read more about those below. Keep an eye out for our September newsletter that will include the launch of our full fall programming schedule!

Click **HERE** to read more about our Upcoming Small Groups.



# ENGLAND TRIP

## JULY 15 – 23, 2027

You are invited to participate in a nine-day pilgrimage to England departing July 15, 2027. This trip is a First Church charter trip designed with the culture of our church in mind. During this journey, we will explore the rich history of our denomination as we travel the footsteps of John Wesley. Our days in England will remind us of why our life-changing work is so critical and encourage us to continue that work upon our return to the States.

The cost of the trip is \$5498 per person and includes round-trip airfare from Atlanta, all lodging, admission to all sites, ground transportation, tour guides, and two meals each day except while in London. Registration is \$300 and can be completed at [THIS LINK](#). It will be helpful to get registrations as early as possible so that we can make adjustments as needed.



In addition to England, we have the option of a five-day trip extension to Ireland to visit places like Cork, Blarney, and Ring of Kerry among others if enough people are interested. The cost of the extension is **\$1898** per person. *(Please note that optional travel insurance is extra and premiums are determined by the total cost of the trip.)* Please reach out to [Kevin@firstchurchbhm.com](mailto:Kevin@firstchurchbhm.com) if you have any questions. We hope you'll come join us!





# BEGINNING THIS FALL **CONFIRMATION** **CLASS**

This fall our sixth and seventh graders will begin Confirmation classes. Confirmation is a meaningful milestone in the faith journey of our students as it offers the space to ask honest questions, learn more about the church, explore what it means to follow Jesus, and begin claiming their faith as their own. While Confirmation is designed for sixth and seventh graders, it is open to any student who has not yet been through the confirmation process and would like to join us.

We will gather once a month on Sunday evenings from 5:00pm – 6:30pm in the Youth Room. Each gathering will include dinner, class time, conversation, and something fun. Confirmation classes will take place on the following Sundays:

**SEPTEMBER 13 | OCTOBER 4 | NOVEMBER 8 | DECEMBER 6,  
JANUARY 10 | FEBRUARY 7 | MARCH 7 | APRIL 4**

To finish our time together, we will hold a Confirmation Retreat April 9–11 at Camp Sumatanga.

As a congregation, we have the privilege of surrounding these students with encouragement and care as they begin this important season. If you, your family, your small group, or your Sunday School class would like to provide dinner for the youth on one of these nights, please reach out to [Ashley@firstchurchbhm.com](mailto:Ashley@firstchurchbhm.com).

In addition, we invite you to pray for our confirmands as they learn, wonder, grow, and begin to claim their faith in deeper ways this fall. We also invite you to pray for the adults who will walk alongside them throughout this season.



# PARENT LISTENING SESSION

SUNDAY, AUGUST 9 AFTER WORSHIP

Parents and guardians of our nursery, children, and youth are invited to join us on Sunday, August 9 after worship for a Listening Session in the Large Dining Room. We will gather around the table for a meal before moving to a time of sharing our hopes and dreams together. Childcare will be available for nursery through elementary age with a reservation. While the meal is free, please make a **reservation** so that we can be sure there is enough food for all who plan to attend. We look forward to building our future together!

## 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: <b>KEVIN THOMAS</b>                                     | Kevin@firstchurchbhm.com     |
| Pastor: <b>JONATHAN GOSS</b>                                           | Jonathan@firstchurchbhm.com  |
| Executive Pastor: <b>KATIE GILBERT</b>                                 | Katie@firstchurchbhm.com     |
| Associate Pastor: <b>REA GREEN</b>                                     | Rea@firstchurchbhm.com       |
| Minister of Community Engagement: <b>KATHERINE MULLEN</b>              | Katherine@firstchurchbhm.com |
| Minister of Families & Youth: <b>ASHLEY HESS</b>                       | Ashley@firstchurchbhm.com    |
| Organist: <b>RICHARD BYRD</b>                                          | Richard@firstchurchbhm.com   |
| Design: <b>BLAKE HOBBS</b>                                             | Blake@firstchurchbhm.com     |
| Minister of Music: <b>PATRICK EVANS</b>                                | Patrick@firstchurchbhm.com   |
| Office Administrator: <b>PEG THOMPSON</b>                              | Peg@firstchurchbhm.com       |
| Business Administrator: <b>STEVE PITTS</b>                             | Steve@firstchurchbhm.com     |
| Maintenance Supervisor: <b>COTY SMITH</b>                              | Coty@firstchurchbhm.com      |
| Wedding Director: <b>BETSY PATE</b>                                    | Betsy@firstchurchbhm.com     |
| Executive Director of Early Learning Center: <b>CASSANDRA COPELAND</b> | ELC@firstchurchbhm.com       |



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

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