

FIRST Impressions

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A Publication of First Lutheran Church • Birmingham, AL

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First Lutheran Church

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[View our Church Calendar](#)



Pastor's Pen Heavenly Interruptions

“At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and his family were baptized.” - Acts 16:33

What an amazing story we find in the Philippian jail. The miracle of the earthquake and the open doors is only a small part of the work that God was doing. The larger miracle involved the changed lives of those who believed that night. The same source of water that the jailer offered for the washing of the evangelists' wounds proved worthy for his baptism once he had believed. And the Scripture records that “he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God – he and his whole family” (Acts 16:34b).

Continued on page 2

Local Events

Saturday Mornings: The Market at Pepper Place; www.pepperplacemarket.com

Through 5/8: Decorators' Showhouse 2022, Hallmark Farms; www.alabamasymphony.org/event/decorators-showhouse-2022-hallmark-farm

Through 7/3: USFL Football, Protective Life Stadium; www.theusfl.com

5/6-7: Alabama Symphony Orchestra presents Mozart's 40th Symphony & Brahms' First Piano Concerto, Alys Stephens Center; www.alabamasymphony.org

5/7: Birmingham Rose Show, Birmingham Botanical Gardens; www.bbgardens.org

5/11-15: Regions Tradition, Greystone Golf & Country Club; www.regionstradition.com

5/14: Magic City Wine Fest, Birmingham Zoo; www.magiccitywinefest.com

5/14: Do Dah Day Festival, Cahaba Brewing Company; www.dodahday.org

5/24-29: SEC Baseball Championship, Hoover Met; www.secsports.com



(cont'd from p. 1)

This story reminds me of the “one the way” stories: the ten lepers who were healed *on the way* to show themselves to the priests; the disciples who met the risen Jesus *on the way* to Emmaus. In this story, the Philippian jailer who experienced a miracle at the jail immediately began to care for Paul and Silas, and, *on the way*, he and his whole house discovered the love and mercy of God.

Most of our lives are spent on the way to somewhere else. We often think our starting points and destinations are the important places, but we find that the journey is the place where we encounter God. It often isn't when we've arrived safely and have unpacked and are getting comfortable that God intervenes in our lives. Instead, it's when a Samaritan encounters a wounded traveler beside the road, or when a man named Simon visits Jerusalem and finds himself forced to carry a cross to Golgotha, or when a man named Saul is on the road to Damascus, that God chooses to enter lives and change them forever.

It shouldn't surprise us that God uses times like these to enter our lives. They are probably the times when we're not in control, times when God can show us that he can be trusted to order our lives in ways we never

expected. They are probably times when we don't want to be interrupted, but times when God wants us to see that our lives will never suffer from the imprint of His will.

I've never cared much for interruptions. I like getting things done on my own schedule. Too often, I throw up a quick prayer requesting God's blessing on an itinerary I never submitted for His approval. As a result, my plans often require interruptions when God lovingly intervenes, reenters my life, and reminds me of His love.

I recommend these heavenly interruptions to you. Upon immediate consideration, they become but one more task in a long line of things to do. But as we begin to see them for what they are, they become recognizable opportunities for growth and conversion. In retrospect, they are the moments when we feel closest to God and to others. Learn to recognize them for what they are – miracles of God's grace when He shares a little more of Himself with us *on the way*.

Prayer: *Help me, Father, to give myself to you continually, especially when my busyness would keep me separated from you and from others. Amen.*

Pastor Schultz

Worship with us Sundays at
10:15 a.m. in person
or via
Facebook or YouTube.



Called to Serve and Celebrate Ministry Is There Life After Easter?

Few of us remember those Sundays that come the week after Easter. By then the pastel finery is packed away in our closets. The lunch is not as great. The anticipation for corporate worship has dropped down from the seasonal high we felt just a week before. There is less excitement, less panache, less décor — *and more resemblance to that original Easter so many Sundays ago.*

It's easy to forget that the Easter morning of A.D. 33 didn't come with big hats and bowties. Those disciples huddled together in fear, not faith. They tended their wounds, not flaunted their tidiness. And then — *then* — they worshiped Jesus.

They worshiped Jesus not because of what they had to offer, but because *he* bombarded their worlds with hope. He exploded the walls of their wretchedness with the irrefutable fact that the grave had not won, that death had been defeated, that the guilt and power of sin had been slain. They were astonished, at best; despairing, at worst; helpless, in the least — and Jesus walked in with his life-changing peace.

Jesus stepped into their space in the same way he steps into ours by his Spirit — as the resurrected Christ, the reigning King, the Lord of all. He comes as the one who is not served by human hands as though he needed anything, but who gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. He comes as the one whose glory is not contrived by our praise, but whose glory compels our praise — even today, even on this “normal” Sunday.

Or, perhaps, he compels our praise *especially* on this normal Sunday because we're reminded that worship is not about us bringing our best, but about finding him as better. We come to him who first came to us. And we come not to give, but to receive. We come as those who need to hear his voice, feel his nearness, know his love.

We come to get God, to say together, humbly and gladly in the Spirit's power, with the heart of Psalm 116:12-13: *“What shall we render the Lord Jesus for all his resurrection benefits? We will lift up the cup of salvation and call upon his name.”*

Blessings,

Lorenza Robinson

Called to Serve & Celebrate Ministry



Worship Ministry

Give Us Each Day Our Daily Bread

The Gospel of Luke the 11th chapter tells us that Jesus was praying in a certain place and after He finished one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray as John taught his disciples.” This was the only occasion in which any of the disciples ask Jesus to teach them something. And He said to them, “When you pray say (looking specially at the fourth petition of the Lord’s Prayer), ‘Give us each day our daily bread’.” This addresses how we are sustained daily by the gift of our daily bread from the Father whether we pray and ask Him. He provides us with it whether we are believers or unbelievers, whether we are good or evil. There is no discrimination. This petition speaks of our utter dependence upon God. Our physical necessities are all supplied by the Father, day by day. It shows us that our basic needs come from God. We live in daily dependence upon the Father, acknowledging Him as the source of every good. Yet many of us assume that our daily bread is something to be taken for granted, never thinking about the provider. Many of us have no perceptions of why or how our daily bread comes to us. Do we know what is implicated or how it applies to one’s daily life?

Luther interpreted “daily bread” to include the full range of the necessities for bodily life in this world, as well as God’s provisions that grant spiritual life now and eternal life in the age to come. Luther saw “daily bread” as encompassing all of God’s gifts, spiritual as well as physical. Nevertheless, we live our lives at such a fast pace that we often forget to thank God for our daily bread. What can we give ourselves that is not provided by the Father through our daily bread? Many of us never think about physical needs because the things we need are there for us each day unless someone or something changes them. We take for granted that our daily bread will always be there for us. Let us remember that of all the gifts our Father gives, there is not one that we can give ourselves, no not one. Even the breath that sustains our lives is given by the Father and without it we cease to exist. Let us give thanks to the Father who created us in His image to love and glorify Him for His gracious gift of our daily bread.

In His Peace,
Charles Craig
Worship Ministry Chair



*Give us this day
our daily bread*
Matthew 6:11

Christ Care Ministry

The Power of Presence

“Like one who takes away a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar poured on soda, is one who sings songs to a heavy heart.” – Proverbs 25:20

Have you been there? Have you found yourself struggling for the right thing to say, eloquent words of comfort for that hurting soul who is standing in front of you with the silent pleading heart? You want to say something to comfort and then it comes out ... the wrong words ... *“I know how you feel.”*

In his book, *Don't Sing Songs to A Heavy Heart*, Kenneth C. Haugk writes about the power of presence ... yes, your presence, but more than that, who is present in you as you stand in the threshold of some hurting soul's heart. He says, “Who you are is forever interwoven with what you do” or what capacity within which you act. You are a tool that God has prepared.

It's about the presence of Jesus. Over and over, research respondents reported *presence* alone as a powerful caring force. A woman who was 25 when her mother died said, “I don't remember anything they said, only their *presence* and prayers.” Another said, “When people came and were just *present* for me, they were a gift. I felt love, compassion, and acceptance of the fact that I preferred silence over small talk. I was able to be lost in my own thoughts, yet not alone. They helped make a sad time a little more bearable.”

Folks, when you don't know what to say, try saying ... *nothing*. Just let your quiet *presence* be the powerful witness to your love, that is, the love of Jesus in you.

Henri J. M. Nouwen, author of *The Wounded Healer*, says it beautifully: “If there is any posture that disturbs

a suffering man or woman, it is aloofness.

The tragedy of Christian ministry is that many who are in great need, many who seek an attentive ear, a word of support, a forgiving embrace, a firm hand, a tender smile, or even a stuttering confession of inability to do more, often find their ministers distant men who do not want to burn their fingers.”

Your *presence* is worth much, much more than words. Your *presence* communicates to the other that he or she is valued, precious, beloved. Your *presence* brings not only the gift of yourself into the relationship but also, in and through you, the gift of God – Your Jesus. And that, dear friends, is indeed powerful.

God's peace always,

Pastor Tom

Paraphrased from *Don't Sing Songs To A Heavy Heart* by Kenneth C. Haugk, PHD

President's Letter

The Secret of Joy

“Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn to joy.” - John 16:20

There are many kinds of sorrow on earth, but the deepest of all sorrows is when the heart loses Christ, and he is no longer seen, and there is no hope of comfort from him. Only a few are so sorely tempted. All comfort has gone, all joy is ended, there is no help from heaven or sun or moon, from angel or any creature. There is even no help from God. But the world rejoices.

Such joy Christ gives to the world and, on the other hand, deep sorrow to his Christians. At the same time, he paints the world as a place of horror and a child of the devil, for it has no greater joy than to see Christ perish and his Christians shamefully condemned and lost.

That is why Christ tells us. “You have heard both how the world will rejoice and how you will be sorrowful. Therefore, hear it and remember it so that when sorrows abound you may have patience and receive true comfort from such sufferings. I must tempt you thus and let you taste what it means to have lost your Savior and to have died in your hearts, so that you may be given a little knowledge of this mystery. Otherwise, you cannot be given knowledge of my nature. It is too high for you to properly understand, this lofty work, that the Son of God returns to his Father, that is, he dies for you and me and rises again, so that he may bring us likewise into heaven.”

Prayer: Lord, save me from despair, lift me up and let me stand by faith in heaven. Amen

Taken from Martin Luther's sermon on John 16

Speaking of Joy: Pastor Miller and his wife Ashley and daughter will be here for a visit as part of his due diligence in making the decision to accept our call or to continue his call in Mobile. He and Ashley want to meet as many of us as possible, so be sure to mark your calendars for Tuesday evening, May 3rd for a dessert social in the Fellowship Hall. More details to follow.

In His Peace,
Stan Weir
Congregational President

Sunday School is Back!

Sunday morning bible study has resumed! Join us in the fellowship hall at 9:00 a.m. for an hour of study, discussion, and prayer.

Joy of the Lord

"The resurrection of Jesus means there is always the hope of a new day in every area of life."

TRIPP PRINCE



LWML News

Painting the Planet Purple with Servanthood

1942-2022 -- 80 YEARS of GOD'S GRACE

MOTHERS in the BIBLE

Eve – known as the “Mother of mankind” because she was the very first mother.

Sarah (Mother of Isaac) – The wife of Abraham and gave birth to Isaac when was over 100 years old.

Rebekah (Mother of Jacob and Esau) – She ensured the more righteous son, Jacob, receive the patriarchal blessing from his father, as the Lord intended (Genesis 27).

Rachael – She was the wife of Jacob and the mother of Joseph (coat of many colors) and Benjamin.

Jochebed (Mother of Aaron, Moses, and Miriam) – When the Pharaoh an gave order to kill all baby boys of the Hebrews, she hid Moses for 3 months. (Hebrews 11:23, Exodus 1-2)

Naomi – Mother-in-law of Ruth. Ruth accompanied Naomi to her homeland. She guided her daughter in law into a marriage with Boaz.

Hannah – The wife of Elkanah. She was childless for many years but after much prayer, became mother to Samuel the prophet.

Bethsheba – The mother of Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived.

Abijah – Her son Hezekiah was a king who did what right in the eyes of the Lord.

Azubah – She was the wife of King Asa and was the mother and godly influence of Jehosaphat.

Jedidah – She was the mother of Josiah who succeeded his father as king when he was only 8 years old.

Elizabeth – The mother of John the Baptizer, who prepared the way for the Lord.

Mary – **She is the Mother of Jesus.**

Eunice – Mother of Timothy who was a disciple / spiritual son to Apostle Paul

Lois – Mother of Eunice and grandmother of Timothy.

Today and always, we are surrounded by **HIS** grace and mercy. Serve the Lord with Gladness!

Sheree McGraw, President
First Lutheran Church LWML



Call Committee Update

On April 10, the voters assembly accepted the recommendation of the call committee and approved issuing a call to Pastor Wayne Miller. The call was extended to him on April 17 and he officially acknowledged the call on April 20 (see letter on the following page). Plans have been made for him to visit Birmingham and First Lutheran on May 2 – 4. During his visit he will meet with the board of directors, the deacons, worship media and tech group, and the congregation at large. Pastor Miller, his wife Ashley, and their daughter Addison will spend time with Pastor Schultz touring the church and getting to know the Birmingham metro area. Time will also be included for tailoring the visit to address any requests they may have.

On May 3, we'll hold a congregational "Meet and Greet" in the Fellowship Hall between 6:30 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. to allow as many members of the church as possible to meet and get to know Pastor Miller and Ashley. Everyone is encouraged to attend. Desserts and light refreshments will be served during this time.

Please continue to pray that the Holy Spirit will guide Pastor Miller as he considers our call.

Glen Thompson
Call Committee Chairman

We Love to Tell the Story of Jesus' Love!

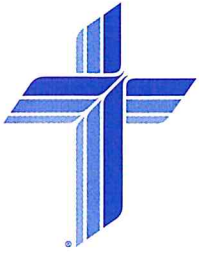
A huge THANK YOU to the team who coordinated and participated in our 2022 Lenten Devotional series! This year we expanded to include both adult and kid versions of devotionals (a total of 98 videos) and included participation from St. Paul and Unity Lutheran Churches (a total of 43 participants).

With that group effort, we reached (through First Lutheran's social media platforms):

- over 12,700 people through Facebook and YouTube (during the Lenten Season)
- over 15,000 searches through Google and Yelp (Q1)
- almost 4,000 visits to our website (during the Lenten season)

There is also an unknown reach for visitors that participated in our services based on word-of-mouth and individuals' social media posts. These results have tremendously increased our outreach efforts. We now have over 370 followers on our social media accounts and a strong presence when searched on Google.

Please keep sharing the story of Jesus' love and glory and continue to invite your friends and family to follow our Facebook page and YouTube channel.



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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PASTOR WAYNE J. MILLER

April 20, 2022

Dear Members of First Lutheran,

Christ is Risen! He is Risen, Indeed! Alleluia!

I hope and pray that your Holy Week and Easter was blessed with Christ's gifts. For me, Easter Sunday was a little "call day" when I received a phone call that afternoon from your Call Committee Chairman, Glen Thompson. I received my call documents on April 20, and this is to officially notify you that I acknowledge this call with humbleness and faith in the process of accepting or returning this call.

I received my first call from Concordia Seminary in 2015 and I have been serving Grace Lutheran Church in Mobile ever since. In the Office of Holy Ministry within the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, God gives us pastors some measure of free will as to where we will serve and sometimes God moves us when a congregation like yours issues a call.

So as of now I have 2 calls to consider: Pastor of Grace Lutheran in Mobile and Pastor of First Lutheran of Birmingham. In the coming weeks, I will be considering where to serve through prayer and contemplation. I plan on visiting you the beginning of May and so I appreciate Grace in Mobile giving me the time and space to consider your call. I will also be reviewing my call here at Grace. Due to some preplanned vacation time and existing church duties, I'm just letting you know that my decision process may take longer than normal. I promise you that I will give First Lutheran due diligence in my consideration.

I ask you as members of First Lutheran for 2 things. First, to pray; to pray for me and my family, and to pray for Grace in Mobile and for yourselves that God's will is made clear. Secondly, I welcome your advice and encouragement. God does work through his people which is why a visit face to face is always part of my process. Currently, I do not know where I can best serve God, but I trust that the Holy Spirit will guide my decision. One certainty is that God will take care of both flocks. I appreciate this divine call and thank you for your prayers. I look forward to meeting some of you and being introduced to the Birmingham area.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Wayne J. Miller

CC Rev. President Eric Johnson, Southern District President, LCMS



FIRST LUTHERAN STAFF

INTERIM PASTOR
Rev. Kurtis Schultz

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
Rev. Kurtis Schultz

MINISTRY COORDINATORS:

CHRIST CARE
Rev. Tom Lackey

OUTREACH & INREACH
Vacant

SERVE & CELEBRATE
Lorenza Robinson

FACILITIES & PROPERTIES
Stan Weir

WORSHIP
Charles Craig

FIRST IMPRESSIONS EDITOR
Heather Lackey

Birthdays & Anniversaries



- 5/1: Margaret Golden
- 5/5: Mali Mathru
- 5/12: Dorothy Sims
- 5/17: James Melton
- 5/17: Kelsey Washington
- 5/18: Charlie Hayes
- 5/28: Sophia Rotton

No May anniversaries on record.

Worship Team...May 2022

May 1
Pastor: Kurtis Schultz
Worship Asst: Anthony McGraw
Reader: Heather Lackey
Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris & Jay McGraw
Music: Larry Donaldson

May 22
Pastor: Tony Ramsey
Worship Asst: Glen Thompson
Reader: Frances Robinson
Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris & Jay McGraw
Music: Larry Donaldson

May 8
Pastor: Tom Noon
Worship Asst: Charles Craig
Reader: Mike Halbrooks
Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris & Jay McGraw
Music: Larry Donaldson

May 29
Pastor: George Murdaugh
Worship Asst: Robert Regulus
Reader: Wendy Harris
Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris & Jay McGraw
Music: Larry Donaldson

May 15
Pastor: Tom Lackey
Worship Asst: Henry Mosley
Reader: Robert Regulus
Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris & Jay McGraw
Music: Larry Donaldson



MAN UP! Meets the 4th Saturday of the month at 8:30 a.m. All men are welcome to join us for a time of fellowship, prayer, and devotion.

Contact Lorenza Robinson for information on how MAN UP! is meeting during the pandemic.