

FIRST Impressions

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A Publication of First Lutheran Church • Birmingham, AL

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www.firstlutheranbham.org

[View our Church Calendar](#)



Pastor's Pen Epiphany Moments

"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple." (Isaiah 6:1)

Can you remember a time when you were routinely having your devotions, or were sitting in a worship service, or perhaps contemplating the word of God in prayer, and suddenly you were made aware that you were in God's presence? You knew that you were actually in conversation with God himself, and after momentary embarrassment at being caught so off guard, you were quickly transformed into a true time of Epiphany.

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Local Events

Through 1/16: Glow Wild: An Animal Lantern Celebration, Birmingham Zoo; www.birminghamzoo.com

Through 3/25: Birmingham Squadron Basketball, BJCC; www.birmingham.gleague.nba.com

1/12: *Sleeping Beauty*, performed by The State Ballet Theatre of Ukraine, Alabama Theatre; www.alabamatheatre.com

1/13-14: Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony, UAB Alys Stephens Center; www.alabamasymphony.org

1/21: The Music of Queen, BJCC; www.alabamasymphony.org

1/24 - 2/4: *Hamilton*, BJCC; www.americantheatreguild.com/birmingham/shows/hamilton

1/27: Stayin' Alive: *One Night of the Bee Gees*, Lyric Theatre; www.lyricbham.com

1/28: Pepper Place Winter Market opens; www.pepperplacemarket.com



(cont'd from p. 1)

A grieving Isaiah, going about his routine priestly duties in the temple, was overcome by an unexpected revelation of God's presence. He was transfixed by a vision of heavenly worship. He knew he was in the presence of a holy God. He could only stand there, out of place and unworthy, until, in answer to his dilemma, God reached out, cleansed him, and included him. That day he knew with Habakkuk that "the Lord was in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before him."

A lonely John, exiled to the island of Patmos, "alone" on the Lord's Day, was overcome by a booming voice coming from behind him like the sound of a trumpet. He turned to look and fell at the feet of the risen Lord, because he felt strangely out of place. Encouraging him not to be afraid, the Lord laid his hand upon him and raised him up, and then called him into the heavenlies where he entered into the great worship scene before the throne of God.

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." Now and again we need to have our eyes lifted from the routines of our life and to look again at things from the perspective of eternity, to be reminded that we worship and serve a holy God before whom we can only confess our unworthiness - who loves us so much that he overwhelms us with his gracious presence. Thank God for his gift of Epiphany moments!

*Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
Casting down their golden crowns
around the crystal sea.
Cherubim and seraphim
falling down before thee,
Who wert and art,
and evermore shalt be.*

- Reginald Heber

In His Peace,
Pastor Schultz

From the President

Happy New Year! I hope you had a blessed Christmas with family and friends. I hope that you participated in the special Advent activities at the church – the Advent meals and services, the Advent online devotions, Christmas tree decorating, caroling in the neighborhood, Santa’s workshop at the Birmingham YMCA, and the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services. It was a very busy time and I want to thank all those who coordinated and participated in making everything happen. I know that God will use our talents and participation to accomplish his goals and to connect those outside the church to him. I am looking forward to experiencing the harvest.

January is going to be a busy time for the church. On January 8 we will have a Voter’s Meeting to review and approve a budget for 2023. The 2023 proposed budget while very similar to the 2022 budget, has been modified to update a proposed minister’s salary, more emphasis on outreach and member Bible study and fellowship activities.

The Call Committee will interview and rank between two and six seminary pastoral candidates. The committee will submit the ranking to the seminaries by March 1. By the end of March, we should know whether or not we matched with a candidate.

The board is planning several outreach activities. We are exploring the idea of a community yard sale hosted by the church in the spring or summer. We are planning English as a Second Language classes and also looking into a ministry to UAB students. With the help of the neighborhood association, we’re also developing projects with the community around the church.

Involving church members in Bible study is another area the board is placing an emphasis on. WE are developing resources and will share those with the membership. Please be on the lookout for this information and participate in the studies offered.

I thank God for the dedicated members of the church who are working to connect people and themselves to Jesus. I look forward to what God has in store for us.

All Glory to God!

Glen Thompson
Congregational President

Share the Love of Christ!

Did you know that our 2022 Lenten Devotionals reached **over 12,700 viewers??**

Join our adult and children outreach as we share quick devotionals from Michael Hoy and Stephenie Hovland from their latest collections:

Amazing Grace

In honor of the 250th anniversary of "Amazing Grace," share the words of the beloved song in our lives today and the lives of those in the Bible who experienced the amazing grace of God, revealed most profoundly in the salvation of Jesus.

God's Grace is Great!

As children reflect on the words of "Amazing Grace" they are reminded that God's great grace was poured out upon us because of the sacrifice Jesus made for us on the cross.

Sign Up Today for a Recording Session!

- Jan 7, in 30 min blocks from 10am-3pm
- Jan 8 after church
- Jan 28, in 30 min blocks from 10am-3pm
- Jan 29 after church

Please email gingerareeves@gmail.com to sign up or ask about selfie videos!



Advent and Christmas at First

From decorating the sanctuary to caroling in the neighborhood and worshipping on Christmas Eve, it was a beautiful and fun-filled season at First!



Worship Ministry Discipleship

Jesus spoke these words to Simon and his brother Andrew, who were fisherman, while he was passing alongside the sea of Galilee “Follow me, and I make you fishers of men.” (Mark 1:17 ESV) They immediately left their nets and followed Jesus thus becoming his followers and disciples. Raising the question: Just who are His disciples? Disciples are Christians:

- Who follow, believe, trust, have faith and are obedient to the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. They have accepted God and shares in making God real to others so that they may experience God’s mercy, forgiveness, love and grace.
- Who are self-giving (love) having sacrificial concerns for another person. They take what God gives them (talents) and use them to bring others to Christ.
- Who minister to others that the Gospel may be seen through the life they live and to let others know that there’s nothing we can do to earn salvation. We are God’s children and our redemption is a gift of (pure) grace, a gift offered without any stipulations and is their duty to inform people of this precious gift. Jesus lived, died, and rose to life to give this precious gift to all mankind.
- Who humbly listen to God and proclaim his message. They are generous, grateful for their gifts and are disciplined to abide by the Word of our Lord Jesus Christ.

However, Jesus final command to his disciples, which includes all believers is, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...” (Matt.28:19). This is the mission of all believers to go and make other disciples for Jesus until the end of time. God does not leave you alone, the Holy Spirit guides and direct us to share the grace of God with others. Jesus has called you to serve and has given each of us the implements to do so.

In His Peace,
Charles Craig
Worship Ministry Chair

Called to Serve and Celebrate Ministry

This year, 2023, is going to be a year of blessings, recompense, healing and love. Work out your faith. Don't second-guess the wonderful year God has laid out before you.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Lorenza Robinson

Called to Serve & Celebrate Ministry



VOTER'S MEETING

Sunday, January 8, 2023

Immediately Following Worship

Agenda: Approval of the 2023 Budget

Christ Care Ministry

The Gift of Faith

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”

- Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV 1984)

When I was eleven years old, God brought me to the understanding that He only was perfect and I was not. I was just a lad and He was, well, GOD. How could I relate to Him? I had heard the preacher say it before in my feeble-boyish attempts to listen to his long-winded sermons, but when my Dad later said to me in his serious but gentle voice, “Jesus was the answer,” I hung on his every word. Dad told me I could relate to God because even though He was perfect, He had also become a man. He, Jesus, was the bridge, so to speak. He paid for my sins on the cross. The most amazing thing happened ... my heart, by the power of the Holy Spirit, accepted the words I heard from a man I knew loved me very much. Dad simply finished his few words with, “I love you son, but Jesus loves you so much more.” At that moment I found out that I could be forgiven and know I was going to heaven.

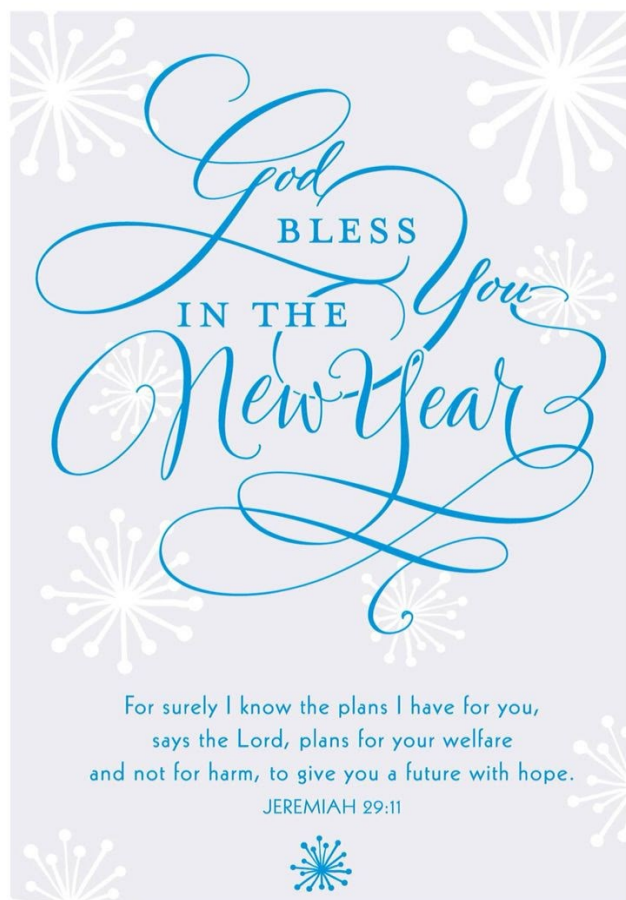
That evening, I pulled out the small Bible my parents had given me seeking answers to more questions as my mind continued to race, Do I believe in God? Yes. Do I believe the Bible is God’s Word to all people? Yes, Do I believe what the Bible says? Yes. That all have sinned and fall short of God? Yes. Do I want to become a Christian? Yes. How does one go about praying? I don’t know. I figured if God was God, He would understand if I just told Him what was on my mind.

I simply said, and I still say it to this day, *“God, I don’t know everything about You. I don’t think I ever will. But I do know I am a sinner and I know I want to be forgiven. I know I want Christ in my life and I want to go to heaven. I want to become a Christian. With that I accept You. Amen.”* No tears (oh, maybe some when I look back), no lightning bolts, no wind, no visions. What a relief! God took me from a boy's skepticism to belief ... the precious gift of faith was given by God.

May your New Year be filled with the peace of God.

Pastor Tom

Joy of the Lord



5th Sunday Potluck

January 29

Bring a dish to share and join us in the Fellowship Hall immediately following the worship service.

**Join us on the Second Sunday
of the month at 5:00PM for**

Evening Prayer

✠ ENTER IN SILENCE ✠

✠ WORSHIP PRAYERFULLY ✠

✠ DEPART IN PEACE ✠



LWML News

Painting the Planet **Purple** with Servanthood

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



The start of a new year is an ideal time to reflect on the past, take account of our Christian walk, and consider the direction God may want to lead us in the coming days. Let us set aside some time to pause and evaluate our spiritual condition.

A New Year with the Lord

*A new year is about to unfold
With new opportunities to explore
Doors will open for new experiences,
New adventures with the Lord*

*Remember not the former things,
The things of this past year,
The Lord will do new things in us,
Much more than we are aware*

*For He will make a way for us
As we put our trust in Him
And He will guide our step
By His presence we have within*

*What God has placed within our hearts,
We find we'll be able to do
If we look for opportunities,
We'll see the door to go through*

*We mustn't let anything hold us back
But rise up and take our place
And be all that God wants us to be
With a fresh touch of His grace*

By M.S. Lowndes

Today and always we are surrounded by **HIS** grace and mercy.

Serve the **LORD** with gladness.

Sheree McGraw, President
First Lutheran Church LWML

Bible Study Opportunities

The new Board of Directors has met a couple of times now and we are looking for activities that will allow all our church members to have the opportunity to participate in fellowship and the study of God's Word with each another.

We'd like to let everyone know what is currently being offered, what we are working on for the future, plus other available references that you can access on your own or with a family member or friend.

Currently Offered

- **Sunday Morning Bible Study - 9:00am**

- **Adult Bible Study** – currently taught by Pastor George Murdaugh. The class allows for all members to participate in a group setting.
- **Children's Sunday School** - will be offered when children are attending. If you know of times when your family or friends might want to have their children come to Sunday school, please let Wendy Harris know in advance so our team can prepare lessons. We are happy to provide this class as needed.

- **Wednesday Evening Bible Study ** - 5:30pm**

- Saturday Morning Bible Study - 8:00am**

- Also taught by Pastor Murdaugh. Everyone participates via Zoom. Pastor Murdaugh started these classes with his previous parishioners in Georgia and they still participate with us.
- If you are interested in participating, please provide your email address to Pastor Murdaugh. His email is georgeearl@hotmail.com. He will add your email address to his distribution list. You will receive an email a few days before the class with a link to the Zoom call that you'll simply click when it's time to attend.

** Wednesday Evening Bible Study is on hiatus until January 2023.

On the Horizon

We would like to resume our previous Bible study groups – the women's Bible study and the Men's Bible study. Once we have the new pastor in place, he will be responsible for teaching both studies. If there are any members who would like to take lead these classes in the interim, we would be happy to collaborate with you to get this started. Please see Wendy Harris if interested.

- **Women's Bible Study** – If you are interested in attending or leading, please let us know the day/time that works best for you. This class was previously held on Tuesday at 10:00 a.m.

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- **Men's Bible Study** - If you are interested in attending or leading, please let us know the day/time that works best for you. This class was previously held on Saturday at 9:00 a.m.

On-Line References Available for Access Anytime

First Lutheran Church Website –

<https://firstlutheranbham.org> - On our website, you'll find several links to a variety of options available for studying the Word.

Other Available Websites

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmLGRBBuTB6teJBRv7LmFqQ>

Chad Bird is a Scholar in Residence at 1517. He has served as a pastor, professor, and guest lecturer in Old Testament and Hebrew. Learn more about Chad by [clicking here](#).

<https://youtube.com/@askcliffe>

The "Give Me An Answer" ministry began as an outgrowth of the dialogues Cliffe Knechtle has had with students on various university campuses throughout the United States. Learn more about Cliffe by [clicking here](#).

Do You Have a Suggestion?

We want to hear from you! Are you looking for an opportunity to have a potluck dinner as part of a Bible Study? Are you looking to share in God's Word at an off-site location? Or do you have other ideas? Please share with Wendy Harris (L77855@gmail.com) and the board will look into implementing these suggestions.

We are excited to share this information with you and we encourage everyone to take an opportunity to participate in one of the available classes being offered. Spending time in the Word is sometimes the thing we take for granted or don't always make time for on a regular basis. However, taking time out to study the Word can improve our lives in so many ways by:

- Helping us recognize God's Voice. We can know that God is speaking to us because we know the things He would say.
- Calling us to salvation and holiness.
- Revolutionizing our lives

...and what can be better than that?

Sincerely,

Wendy Harris

First Lutheran Board of Directors

Hurricane Ian Relief

From the Southern District President:

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Southern District,

As you know, our fellow Brothers and Sisters in Florida were hit by the devastating hurricane, Ian. We in the Southern District are no strangers to the devastating impact of major hurricanes, and rely on the generosity of others to help fund our recovery efforts. Since we have been blessed this year by not being hit by a major hurricane, so far, **I would like us to rise up and generously support our sister District, the FL/GA District of the LCMS.**

100% of your financial gifts will go directly to the FL/GA District to help support their on-going efforts to aid in recovery after Hurricane Ian.

You may give through the Southern District, LCMS by following this link: [Donation \(eservicepayments.com\)](https://eservicepayments.com)

You will see several options for giving. Click on Disaster Relief, fill in Ian, then go to the bottom of the page and click Continue to proceed to the payment page. Giving this way is safe and secure.

If you would prefer to give via check, you can make your check out to Southern District, LCMS. Put Ian in the memo. 100% of all gifts will go directly to the FL/GA District to help with hurricane relief.

Thanks and Blessings!

Your Servant in Christ's Mission,
Rev. Eric Johnson
President, Southern District LCMS



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



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



1/5: Terry Lepp

1/5: Elaine Tabb

1/7: Jeremy Regulus

1/12: Frances Foy

1/14: Tommy Lampella

1/16: Kristal Walton

1/22: Stan Weir

1/27: Charles Craig

1/27: LaShanda Crenshaw

No January Anniversaries on Record

Worship Team...January 2023

January 1

Pastor: Kurtis Schultz

Worship Asst: Anthony McGraw

Reader: Jay McGraw

Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris &

Jay McGraw

Music: Larry Donaldson

January 22

Pastor: Tony Ramsey

Worship Asst: Glen Thompson

Reader: Frances Foy

Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris &

Jay McGraw

Music: Larry Donaldson

January 8

Pastor: George Murdaugh

Worship Asst: Charles Craig

Reader: Sheree McGraw

Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris &

Jay McGraw

Music: Larry Donaldson

January 29

Pastor: Tom Noon

Worship Asst: Robert Regulus

Reader: Charles Craig

Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris &

Jay McGraw

Music: Larry Donaldson

January 15

Pastor: Tom Lackey

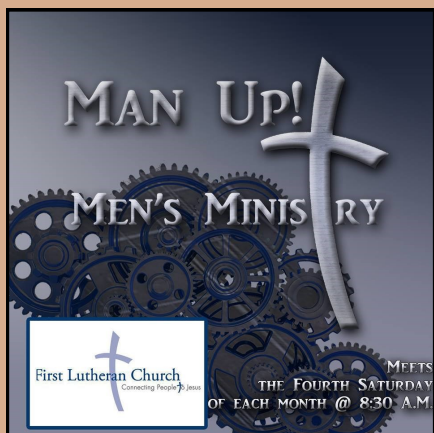
Worship Asst: Henry Mosley

Reader: Carol Lackey

Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris &

Jay McGraw

Music: Becky Schultz



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 post-pandemic MAN UP! meetings.

