

FIRST Impressions

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Pastor's Pen Light for What Ails Us

"The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light." Isaiah 9:2a

There are intensities of darkness. A number of years ago I visited Ruby Falls, which is deep under ground in a cave. I was led through a series of caves illumined by hidden spotlights. I'll never forget the last one we entered. It was the deepest in the whole series, the "farthest from the light," as our guide phrased it. After he had the group of us all together, he turned off every light in the cavern – and we were in the dark. Perhaps it was no darker than other places in the world, but I could not see my hand in front of my face—and I

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Local Events

Saturdays: Pepper Place Winter Market;
www.pepperplacemarket.com

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

Through 2/4: Birmingham Restaurant Week: Winter Edition, various restaurants throughout the city; www.bhamrestaurantweek.com

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

2/3-19: *Dreamgirls*, Red Mountain Theatre; www.redmountaintheatre.org

2/9-26: Jimmy Buffett's *Escape to Margaritaville*, Virginia Samford Theatre;
www.virginiasamfordtheatre.org

2/17-18: Alabama Symphony presents Beethoven's Triple Concerto, Alys Stephens Center;
www.alabamasymphony.org



(cont'd from p. 1)

still remember the sensation of being in that total obscurity far beneath the surface of the earth!

In a different way, I have been in various levels of non-physical darkness at times in my life-my hopes destroyed, the future I had designed destroyed, little guidance for the next move. Has not each of us, however, similarly, experienced the darkness of life's twist and turns?

Isaiah reminds us that "The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light". When Matthew echoes the words of the prophet he tells us that the light is Jesus, who by simply being with us has brought us our dawn.

At the time of my darkest gloom faced with fear and the isolation that deep darkness brings, God has recalled his word of promise to me that Jesus is with me giving me his light of life. I cherish those times of darkness where the presence of Jesus was my only light. They have persuaded me that anywhere I go, no matter how deep the darkness becomes, Jesus, is with me. Nothing can persuade me to the contrary. Light, by its very nature, dispels the gloom. Jesus, by His very nature disperses the confusion and death we encounter in darkness.

The Son of God comes with His presence in word and sacrament-guiding, correcting, admonishing, forgiving, and loving. He uses every means to lead us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Come, Bright and Morning Star; illumine our darkness and lead us from night to never-ending day. Amen

In His Peace,
Pastor Schultz



Lent Midweek Schedule

Wednesday Evenings

February 22 - March 29

Dinner - 5:15 p.m.

Evening Prayer Worship - 6:00 p.m.

From the President Engaged as Lutherans

It is difficult to know where the Holy Spirit will take us or what will happen to us in the future. We can take encouragement from Paul who writes in Ephesians 4:1-3, “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” By being humble, gentle, patient with one another through the love of the Lord, the church’s mission is poised to flourish. We need to be members intentionally on the move together – building and supporting the body, planting seeds, and pointing people to Christ. How do we intentionally move together? We take advantage of the corporate opportunities available at the church such as Bible studies, worship services, and participating in church-sponsored activities.

Our church is intentionally focusing on our Highlands neighborhood as a mission field. We are part of the neighborhood and we want to engage the members of the neighborhood and connect them to Jesus. Every member of the church can help move us in oneness toward this goal.

The Board of Directors is working on ways to engage the community around the church. The emphasis of these engagements is that they be something relevant to the community, be able to be done in a defined time period, and be something that is nonthreatening to our members or the neighborhood. The Christmas caroling we recently participated in is an example. Around 12 of our members walked up Milner Crest singing Christmas carols. Members of the community greeted them, shared refreshments, and some joined in the singing. Time was spent getting to know our neighbors. In the future we are planning a neighborhood yard sale, a pancake breakfast, and a Christmas ornaments craft day all with the intention of getting to know the people around us and to begin building relationships with them. It is our intent as members to intentionally move as one to expand the kingdom of God. Please look for the announcements of the events and come and participate.

To God be the glory.

Glen Thompson
Congregational President

AMAZING *grace*

A WORSHIP SERIES FOR LENT

In honor of the 250th anniversary of the writing of “Amazing Grace,” this worship series for Lent by theologian Michael Hoy ties the words of the beloved song to our lives today as Christ’s disciples. Those in the Bible who experienced the amazing grace of God help us each week to realize that though we once were lost in sin, we now have been found by Jesus, and though we once were blind to God’s mercy, we now can see his love at work in us through our Savior’s death and resurrection.

Ash Wednesday • David (Psalm 51:1): We find comfort that King David confessed his sins to God and received amazing grace in God’s forgiveness and a connection to Jesus, the Savior.

Week 1 • Isaiah of Babylon (Isaiah 6:7): We see God’s amazing grace at work in the life of the prophet Isaiah, who proclaimed to God’s people the salvation that was to come through the Suffering Servant.

Week 2 • The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:32): We hear of the great love of a father who lavished amazing grace upon the Prodigal Son, a picture of our Heavenly Father’s lavish compassion toward us.

Week 3 • The Blind Man (John 9:24): We witness Jesus bringing sight to a man born blind, giving the man the added spiritual vision to see the amazing grace of God found in Jesus, who heals us all.

Week 4 • The Woman at the Well (John 4:13-14): We listen to Jesus teach a woman at the well of his amazing grace poured out for us abundantly, which satisfies our thirsting souls for all eternity.

Week 5 • Paul (1 Timothy 1:15): We marvel at the story of amazing grace in the life of Paul, who turned from persecutor of Christ to proclaimer of our Lord through the mighty power of the Holy Spirit.



Worship Ministry Forgotten Benefits

*“He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.”
- Psalm 103*

The psalmist expresses God’s love for him and gives Him thanks and praise for the benefits that He has bestowed upon him. God does not treat him or you and me as He should because of our iniquities before Him. It is the Lord we should bless as He is the fountain of all that is good. How can we bless the Lord for the countless benefits that we receive daily without any effort from us? We should bless and give thanks to the Lord with our soul and all that is within us. Do you ever think how good God is to you and me? Of course, we live in a world that is naturally hostile to accountability, to discipline, and to God. Many of us are about individualism, that is to do what we want making things of the world and ourselves gods. We take the benefits of God for granted by doing for ourselves giving no thought to what God continues to do for us. Nevertheless, God does not deal with us according to our sins but according to His gracious goodness. Forgiveness for our sins is the most important benefit we can receive. Forgiveness is first because by the pardoning of sin which removed the wrath of the Father and restored us to His favor. He has cured the sickness of our souls that leads to death and redeemed us from eternal damnation and obtained eternal redemption for all believers.

Moreover, how many times do we need God’s forgiveness for our iniquities? It is impossible to count. Day after day, our transgressions should bring God’s judgement. The justice we deserve before God is condemnation. Yet over and over, He removes our iniquities. Our iniquities have gone to the Cross with Jesus and taken away the wrath and given us redemption. Jesus’ righteousness has become ours so that we may present our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God. He has not inflicted the judgement which we have merited. As the heaven is high above the earth, so is God’s mercy above the merits of those who fear Him. Though it is for our own benefits, by the pardoning mercy of God, that we are to take comfort and give Him glory.

In His Peace,
Charles Craig
Worship Ministry Chair

Called to Serve and Celebrate Ministry

Lent is an opportune time to reflect on what it means to be a follower of Christ. Likewise, it's an opportunity to repent for our misdeeds and misgivings and to increase the intensity of our prayer, fasting, almsgiving, practice of our faith and welcoming others as our brothers and sisters in our faith community.



Moreover, Lent is a time to grow in and strengthen our faith, which binds us together and makes all things possible because of our love and devotion to Jesus. If we follow his teachings, we become responsible, law-abiding citizens and peace-loving people. We become selfless, mindful of others, who benefit from our good deeds, kindness, charity and generosity.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound.

That saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost but now I'm found,

Was blind but now I see.

Lorenza Robinson

Called to Serve & Celebrate Ministry



Selma Tornado Response

The Southern District LCMS has established a disaster response center at Trinity Lutheran Church in Selma AL. Two response ministries will be working to serve those affected by the recent tornadoes in that area.

If you wish to volunteer, you may do so by contacting Shepherds Heart Disaster Response Ministry (www.facebook.com/ShepherdsHeartMinistry) or Forged by Fire Services (www.facebook.com/ForgedByFireServices).

If you'd like to directly support them with donations, you can send a designated gift to them through First Lutheran Church (www.firstlutheranbham.org).



Christ Care Ministry

Taking it One Day at a Time

“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” - Matthew 6:34

Need a philosophy to live by? Try this one:

‘Today I will delete from my calendar two days - yesterday and tomorrow. Yesterday was for learning and tomorrow will be a consequence of what I do today.’

- Today I will face life with the conviction that this day will never return again, that it may be the last opportunity I’ll have to contribute because there’s no guarantee I’ll see tomorrow’s sunrise.
- Today I will be courageous enough not to let opportunity pass me by, all the while remembering, one learns from mistakes made along the way.
- Today I will invest my most valuable resource, my time, into my most important possession, the life God has given me. I’ll spend each minute purposefully, making today a unique opportunity. I’ll tackle every obstacle, knowing that with God’s help I can overcome it.
- Today I will resist doubt and pessimism and illuminate my world with a smile. I’ll maintain a strong faith, expect nothing but the best, take time to be happy, see every task as an opportunity to honor God, and endeavor to leave His footprint on the hearts of those I meet.
- Today I invite you to start afresh with me, to dream again, to *live one day at a time*, remembering that “*with God all things are possible.*” (Matthew 19:26).

Prayer

Heavenly Father, Today is it! Help me make it the best - to Your glory. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Be at peace, beloved, for God is with us all today.

Pastor Tom

Joy of the Lord



“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” - 2 Timothy 3:16-17

**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***A Prayer of Love from 1 Corinthians 13**

Heavenly Father,

Thank You, that You are a loving, gracious God. Thank You that You've offered us forgiveness and the gift of new life in You. Thank You that Your love is perfect, it never fails, and that nothing can separate us from Your love.

We pray that our lives would be filled and overflowing with the power of Your love so we can make a difference in this world and bring honor to You. We ask for Your help in reminding us the most important things are not what we do outwardly, it's not based on any talent or gift, but the most significant thing we can do in this life is simply to love You and to choose to love others.

Lord, thank You that Your love is patient. Help us show patience with those around us.

Lord, thank You that Your love is kind. Help us to extend kindness to others.

Lord, thank You that true love is not jealous. Help us cast aside feelings of jealousy and hatred toward others.

Lord, thank You that Your love does not brag and is not arrogant. Help us not to live with pride or arrogance, but to choose to walk with humility and grace.

Lord, thank You that true love does not act unbecomingly. Help us to extend kindness instead of rudeness towards others. Help us to lay aside the critical tone and tearing down with our words, so that we can truly walk in peace.

Lord, thank You that true love does not seek its own. Help us not to live selfishly, looking only to our own interests.

Lord, thank You that true love is not provoked. Help us not to become easily angered or so quickly reactive, but instead slow to speak and slow to become angry.

Lord, thank You that Your love does not take into account a wrong suffered. Help us not to hold grudges, but to choose to forgive, even when it's difficult.

Lord, thank You that Your love does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with truth. Help us to love Your words of truth, may we walk in Your freedom and wisdom. Let it be what drives our lives and choices everyday.

Lord, thank You that Your love bears all, believes all things, hopes all things, thank You that Your love never fails.

(cont'd on p. 10)

(cont'd from p. 9)

Help us to love as You love. Fill us with Your Spirit so that we can choose what is best. Thank You that You equip us to face each day with the power of Your love, Your forgiveness, and Your grace.

We love You Lord, and need You today, and everyday. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Today and always we are surrounded by **HIS** grace and mercy. Serve the **LORD** with gladness.

Sheree McGraw, President

First Lutheran Church LWML

Fat Tuesday Pancake Feast

Is it PHAT or FAT Tuesday?

Some call Fat Tuesday, Shrove Tuesday. Shrove Tuesday is the same observance as Mardi Gras in that observers **eat richer, fattier foods as a last indulgence before Lent begins**. For those who observe Shrove Tuesday instead of an entire Mardi Gras season, that richer, fattier food is **PANCAKES**. This meal strives to use all the rich, fatty foods from the home—eggs, lard, butter, sweets—in preparation for 40 days of fasting.



Join us for a Mardi Gras (French for Fat Tuesday) treat at First Lutheran Church, in the Fellowship Hall, on Tuesday, February 21st. **We will mark this preparation for Lent with a Pancake Meal (Breakfast/Brunch/Lunch) from 9 am until 1 pm.** Tasty pancakes and your favorite sides will be served to everyone free of charge! Reservations are not required—but are appreciated. Simply text 205-418-8155 or email secretary@firstlutheranbham.org with your name and the number in your party.

Traditionally, people abstain from eating rich foods during Lent or they give up something important during the forty days before Easter. More recently, rather than make a sacrifice, people have been encouraged to add an activity to prepare for Easter. Instead of fasting from something like meat or desserts, try adding daily acts of kindness, or prayer and devotions. We invite you to watch our Lenten daily devotions on YouTube or Facebook. You'll find a link on our website at <https://firstlutheranbham.org/>

Volunteers are needed to cook, serve, and clean up. To sign up to help, please contact Lorenza Robinson at lorobins@bellsouth.net or 205-901-5190.

Kids' Downloadable Lent Calendar

Download a free printable Lenten calendar for the young and young-at-heart!

- Point your phone or tablet's camera at the QR code below
- Tap the banner that appears on your phone or tablet to go directly to the Kids' Lenten Calendar
- Or, simply [CLICK HERE](#)

Download your free printable
Lenten Calendar
for the Young and Young-at-heart!

- Point your camera at the QR code.
- Tap the banner that appears on your phone or tablet to go directly to the Kids' Lenten Calendar.



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



2/3: Desland Robinson
2/7: Martha Lampella
2/7: Jana Rotton-Murphy
2/22: Everett Robinson
2/24: Pat Thompson
2/27: Sheree McGraw

No February Anniversaries
on Record

Worship Team...February 2023

February 5

Pastor: Kurtis Schultz
Worship Asst: Anthony McGraw
Reader: Pat or Glen Thompson
Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris &
Jay McGraw
Music: Larry Donaldson

February 19

Pastor: Tom Lackey
Worship Asst: Henry Mosley
Reader: Heather Lackey
Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris &
Jay McGraw
Music: Becky Schultz

February 12

Pastor: George Murdaugh
Worship Asst: Charles Craig
Reader: Henry Mosley
Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris &
Jay McGraw
Music: Larry Donaldson

February 26

Pastor: Tony Ramsey
Worship Asst: Glen Thompson
Reader: Mike Halbrooks
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 post-pandemic
MAN UP! meetings.

