

FIRST Impressions

What's INSIDE

A Publication of First Lutheran Church • Birmingham, AL

- 1 Pastor's Pen
- 1 Church Calendar Link
- 1 Local Events
- 3 President's Letter
- 4 Lent Season Theme
- 5 Worship Ministry
- 6 Called to Serve Ministry
- 7 Christ Care Ministry
- 8 Selma Tornado Relief
- 9 Joy of the Lord
- 9 Evening Prayer
- 10 LWML Update
- 11 Lent Midweek Schedule
- 12 Kids' Lenten Calendar
- 13 Birthdays & Anniversaries
- 13 Worship Team



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[View our Church Calendar](#)



Pastor's Pen Getting to Know God

"Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding, no one can fathom. (Isaiah 40:28 NIV)

Have you ever complained to God, either verbally or silently, and accused him of not taking care of you, and failing to notice the difficulties that surround your life? Leaders like Moses and Isaiah often heard their people's dissatisfaction with God. In verse 27, the prophet asks, "Why do you say ... and complain, O Israel, 'My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God?'"

Continued on page 2

Local Events

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

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

3/4: 19th Annual Chili Cookoff, Brookwood Village;
www.exceptionalfoundation.org/chili

3/9: Alabama Symphony presents Haydn's Surprise Symphony, Avon Theater;
www.alabamasymphony.org

3/14: An Evening with Tim Tebow, Samford University Wright Center; www.samford.edu/education/events/An-Evening-with-Tim-Tebow

3/19: ASC Presents Patti LaBelle, Alys Stephens Center; www.alysstephens.org

3/31 - 4/16: Red mountain Theatre presents *Bright Star*, Red Mountain Theatre;
www.redmountaintheatre.org



(cont'd from p. 1)

We shouldn't be too hard on the Israelites. At least they were being honest. They were away from the Promised Land in exile in Babylon. They were far away from the temple and the beauty of Mount Zion. In the stresses of exile and foreign captivity, they voiced their feelings regarding God. They complained that God had abandoned them. They felt that he did not know their plight and was unaware of their dire situation. Not too long ago, there was a project in which I was deeply involved. After a few years of fruitful work, it appeared that the work might be stopped and left unfinished. I felt that God had forgotten me and my plight. My complaints were deep and bitter. So were the people of Israel's!

It may surprise us to realize that when we complain about God's lack of care, the real dilemma lies in the fact that we really do not know the character of God. Isaiah is quick to point out both the ignorance and the short term memory of his people. In verse 28, he reminds us that our God is never plagued by fatigue or memory loss or confusion. Our God is never "asleep at the switch." He is never afflicted by indecision or caught unaware by troubling circumstances. These are very human shortcomings. But God's character is never reflected in human weaknesses.

Who does God help and strengthen? Does he come to the aid of the strong, the competent, the clever, the eloquent, or the self-reliant? Isaiah reminds us that those who know God's strength are the weary, the weak, the stumbling and those who are falling. God delights in equipping those who acknowledge their need and vulnerability and flaws. We should spend time with this passage and reflect on the God it reveals to us. When we are at the end of our abilities, we should resist the desire to complain that God's abilities are equally limited. Instead, our weakness is the entrance way to discovering a God who is ready and able and aware of our need. Indeed he delights in giving us the strength necessary to replace our pint-size efforts.

Dear God, free us from accusing you of abandoning us and not caring. Help us to know and trust you, so that our lives might bear testimony to your strength and constant care. Amen.

In His Peace,
Pastor Schultz

From the President Pastoral Call Update

The Call Committee tasked to find our next pastor was formed in December 2021 and consists of five members - Frances Foy, Wendy Harris, Henry Mosley, Robert Regulus, and Glen Thompson - as well as Interim Pastor Kurtis Schultz and Circuit Counselor Pastor Tom Noon. The committee has received two call lists from the Southern District President Pastor Eric Johnson which consisted of 12 candidates. The committee has also reviewed two additional candidates in the field and reviewed two seminary candidates from the Fort Wayne seminary. Over the past almost 15 months, the committee has interviewed 13 candidates and issued 3 calls. To date one called candidate has visited the congregation and all three of our calls have been returned to us unanswered.

The Call Committee has not been discouraged by the process that we have gone through. God has used this time to prepare the congregation for the pastor he has chosen for us. It has been a time for us to listen to the concerns and perspectives of the pastors that we have interviewed and to reflect on changes that we as a congregation needed to make. The congregation has implemented improvements in our fiscal plan that show that we have a long-term plan and people have demonstrated their commitment to the ministry by participating in projects and Bible study.

On February 19 the Voters Assembly extended a call to Pastor Wayne Miller at Grace Lutheran Church in Mobile, Alabama. In April 2022, First Lutheran issued a call to Pastor Miller but that call was returned to us. At the time, Pastor Miller felt that the Lord wanted him to stay in his current ministry. The Call Committee has always felt that Pastor Miller was a good match for our congregation and the committee struggled with the question of whether or not we should recommend to the congregation that another call be issued to Pastor Miller. In early February, the committee felt that God was leading us back to Pastor Miller and that we should issue a call to him. Please pray for Pastor Miller as he considers our second call to him and ask that the Lord would direct his decision and continue to use him to the best of his talents. Since we are in the Lenten season, we do not expect to hear from Pastor Miller until after Easter.

We are looking forward to hearing from Pastor Miller and pray he is the one chosen by God to be our shepherd.

To God be the glory!

Glen Thompson
Congregational President and Call Committee Chairman

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

Children of God - Loved by the Father (1 John 3:1-3)

There have been many great loves, both Biblical and those written by the great authors of our time. Yet some of the most powerful and wonderful love is the “LOVE” that we have received from the Father, through His Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. Of course, we also give this type of love to our families, especially to our children. But is the love that we give to our Lord genuine? Do we experience the same love toward our Lord as we do our families and neighbors? This is a question that each of us must entertain.

On the other hand, there is truly a greater love for us which is no fantasy or a love story. It is the love for all mankind given in a promise by God the Father himself and His Son, our Savior. But do you and I deserve it? I do not think so, yet this love has been given to us unconditionally. A teacher once asked the children in her class what was so amazing about God. One of the children responded, “He knows all about me and yet He still loves me.” He knows all about you and me. He knows of our failing to do His will, our unloving thoughts and unkind words. He knows that we deserve His wrath. Yet He still loves us.

Furthermore, John tells us that the Father has lavished His love on us. He gives love generously, ungrudging, and unselfishly, in the same manner which we give our love to our children. God in His love for us satisfied his justice making us acceptable to himself. He brought us to faith in Jesus and through faith, we possess Christ’s righteousness. We stand before God acceptable to Him through His Son our Savior. However, there are times when we recognize our sinfulness and wonder how God can let you and me into heaven. We must look beyond our feelings and reasons and by faith lay hold to the promises of God. It is not how we feel about God that gives comfort; it is the fact that God loves us that gives us hope. The question is, can you and I wait on the Lord for the fulfillment of His promises as Children of God – beloved by the Father?

In His Peace,
Charles Craig
Worship Ministry Chair



See what great love the Father
has lavished on us, that we
should be called children of God!

1 John 3:1

Called to Serve and Celebrate Ministry

A Prayer for Lenten Grace

Loving God,

During the sacred season of Lent, bring me closer to you.
Prepare a place in my home and heart for silence and solitude, so that I may re-discover the grace of a prayer-full life.

Enlarge my heart so that I give to those in need and, in so doing, re-discover the grace of gratitude and generosity.

Help me to fast from those things that threaten the well-being of body and soul, remind me of the grace and simplicity.

May this season be grace-filled time to rekindle my love for and faith in you.

Amen.

Lorenza Robinson

Called to Serve & Celebrate Ministry

Christ Care Ministry

Worry

Jesus said, “Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life . . . Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to the span of your life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they neither toil nor spin. Yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. . . Therefore, do not be anxious. . . But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.”

- Matthew 6:25-33

God is in the details. His providence is perfect. Nothing is beyond His care. Nothing is beyond His power. Consider: At the equator, the earth is spinning at 1,037 miles per hour. The earth’s orbital speed around the sun is almost 67,000 miles per hour. The earth travels about 1.6 million miles per day. The sun has an orbit of its own in the Milky Way. The sun is about 25,000 light-years from the center of the galaxy, and the Milky Way is at least 100,000 light-years across. The sun and the solar system appear to be moving at a speed of 448,000 miles per hour. And yet we do not feel the movement of the earth, nor do the planets and stars sweep in a blur when we look up. God has perfectly ordered the vastness of what He has created. Indeed, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork” (Psalm 19:1). Since God has put in its place all that is seen and unseen, does He not also

look with infinite care upon the minutes of our days, our “going out and coming in?” Of course He does. That is why on not a few occasions, Jesus said: “Do not be anxious. Do not worry. Do not be afraid.” Yes, there are diseases and evil in the world and many mysteries about life, but God is infinite in power and love. He brings good out of evil and offers solace to the grieving. With loving-kindness He disciplines His children; He teaches them what is right and what is wrong, what enhances life and what diminishes life. He has cleansed our sins through the Blood of His Son, and has transformed our former selves into new creations, destined to be with Him forever. He commands us not to worry, not to be anxious, not to be fearful, but to trust in His love and power, and to walk in His paths of goodness and peace: all of this out of love for us. Why then should we be fearful? Why should we worry? Look up into the heavens. Consider the glory of the night sky. Look at the Cross. Remember His love.

PAX,

Pastor Tom

Shared with permission from the commentaries of my old friend in Christ, Reverend Doctor Norman Henry McCrummen III.

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).

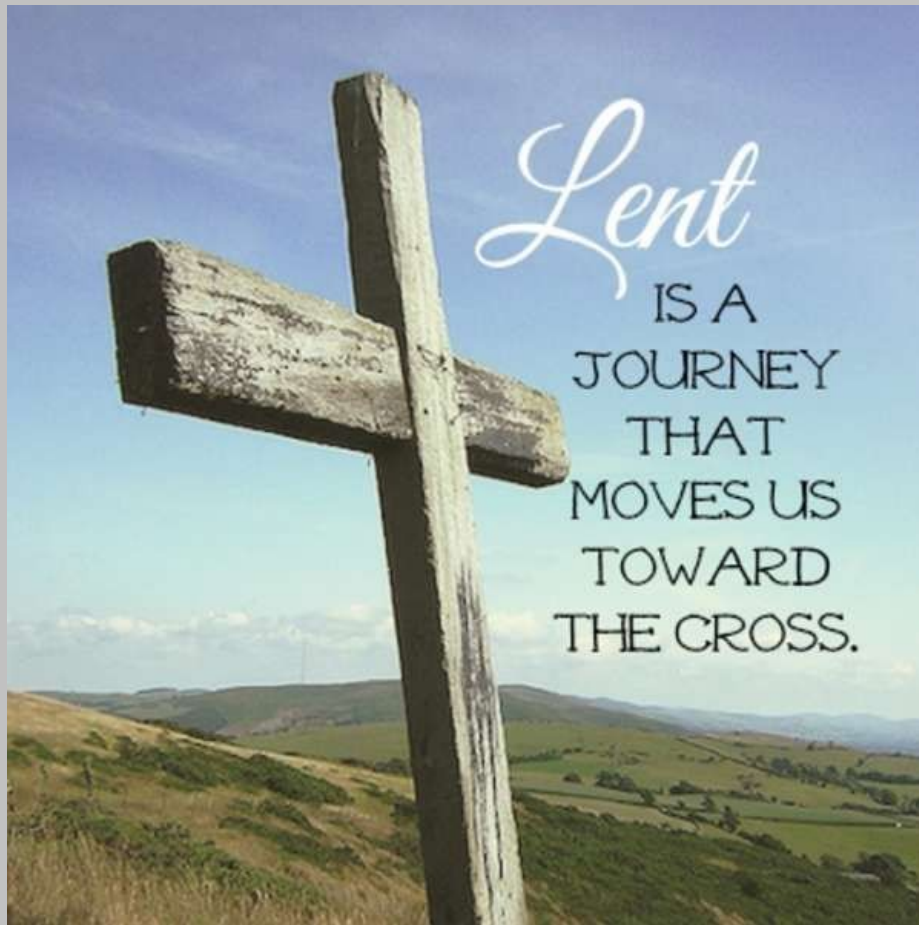
If you'd like to directly support them with donations, you can send a designated gift to them through First Lutheran Church (www.firstlutheranbham.org).

Familiar Faces Volunteer with Forged by Fire in Selma

Pastors Kurtis Schultz, Tom Noon, and McNair Ramsey, along with Lorenza Robinson, Glen Thompson, and Stan Weir, volunteered with Forged by Fire during cleanup from the January 12 Selma tornado.



Joy of the Lord



**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



2023 Convention Celebrate the Lord of the Nations (Psalm 33: 12-13)

Date: June 22 - 25, 2023

Location: Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Theme: Celebrate the Lord of Nations

Scripture Verse: Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom He has chosen as His heritage! The Lord looks down from heaven; He sees the children of man.
-Psalm 33: 12-13

Goal Statement: As His children, we celebrate the Lord of nations.

Objectives: Convention attendees, understand that we are all His children and will:

- Celebrate our Lord through Word and Sacrament
- Honor God by serving our neighbor
- Proclaim His message to the nation

Registration & Information: Visit the LWML website (www.lwml.org).

Coming soon: LWML Zone 2 Spring Christian Growth Workshop
Hosted by Holy Cross Lutheran Church (Tuscaloosa)
Saturday, April 1 2023
more information to come

Please keep these events in your prayers.

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

Serve the **LORD** with gladness.

Sheree McGraw, President
First Lutheran Church LWML



Reminder

Daylight Saving Time begins

Sunday, March 12 at 2:00 a.m.

Be sure to set your clocks **AHEAD** one hour before going to bed Saturday night.



Lent Midweek Schedule

Wednesdays, March 1-29

Dinner - 5:15 p.m.

Evening Prayer Worship - 6:00 p.m.

Sunday Morning Adult Bible Study: Genesis

9:00 a.m.

First Lutheran Fellowship Hall

There is coffee aplenty!



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



3/10: Teresa Murdaugh

3/11: Wayne Speegle

3/12: Ginger Reeves

3/16: Eva Hill

3/25: Jay McGraw

3/28: Gwen Regulus

3/30: Andy Sullivan

3/17: Pat & Glen Thompson

3/23: Vivian & Harold McNair

Worship Team...March 2023

March 5

Pastor: Kurtis Schultz

Worship Asst: Robert Regulus

Reader: Robert Regulus

Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris &

Jay McGraw

Music: Larry Donaldson

March 19

Pastor: George Murdaugh

Worship Asst: Charles Craig

Reader: Wendy Harris

Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris &

Jay McGraw

Music: Becky Schultz

March 12

Pastor: Tom Noon

Worship Asst: Anthony McGraw

Reader: Frances Robinson

Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris &

Jay McGraw

Music: Larry Donaldson

March 26

Pastor: Tony Ramsey

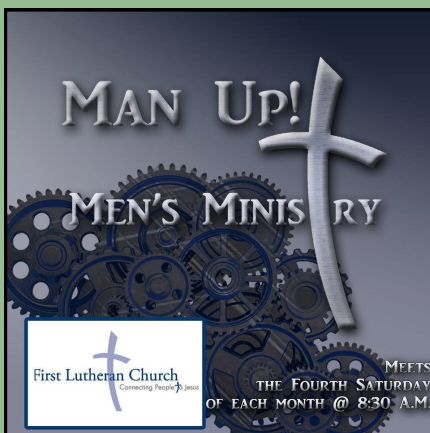
Worship Asst: Henry Mosley

Reader: Eva Hill

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.

