

# FIRST Impressions

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A Publication of First Lutheran Church • Birmingham, AL

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[www.firstlutheranbham.org](http://www.firstlutheranbham.org)

[View our Church Calendar](#)



## Pastor's Pen Thanksgiving Beggars

*"Oh give thanks unto the Lord for his mercy endures forever."  
- Psalm 136:1*

To celebrate true thanksgiving is to get everything in proper perspective. It is to admit that ultimately we are not self-sufficient but totally dependent upon the grace of God. It is said that some of Martin Luther's last words were: "We are all beggars". That is for sure. If we believe that God is the Creator and Owner of all of the earth, then we are in a sense "beggars" indeed. That is to say that ultimately we own nothing. We leave this earth with empty hands.

*Continued on page 2*

## Local Events

**Saturdays through 12/16:** Pepper Place Market;  
[www.pepperplacemarket.com](http://www.pepperplacemarket.com)

**11/1-5:** Christmas Village Festival, BJCC;  
[www.christmasvillagefestival.com](http://www.christmasvillagefestival.com)

**11/4-5:** Moss Rock Festival, Hoover Metropolitan Complex;  
[www.facebook.com/events/1170258927266159/](https://www.facebook.com/events/1170258927266159/)

**11/12:** 6th Annual Magic City Mac & Cheese Festival; Back Forty Beer Company;  
[www.facebook.com/events/905907490640244/](https://www.facebook.com/events/905907490640244/)

**11/30:** ASO presents Bach's *Brandenburg 6 & Holiday Brass*, Avon Theater;  
[www.alabamasymphony.org](http://www.alabamasymphony.org)

**11/30 - 12/-17:** *Holiday Spectacular 2023*, Red Mountain Theatre;  
[www.redmountaintheatre.org](http://www.redmountaintheatre.org)



*(cont'd from p. 1)*

And all that we have even now is really owned by God and given to us as good stewards if we would but acknowledge it. Gratitude is a natural quality in every person who is not entirely given over to selfishness, and the expression of gratitude is the simplest and surest way of giving honor and paying respect to another person.

It is to be expected, then, that expressions of gratitude to God should be among the most basic aspects of our relationship with him. It is all too easy for us to overlook the ordinary, everyday blessings that we enjoy: food and clothing, shelter, friends, health. Too often these things are taken for granted as though they were our due. But the fact that so many of God's good gifts have been with us all our lives is a circumstance that ought rather to increase our sense of thankfulness.

It is good for us to pause and recollect, for the comforts and blessings of our lives always outweigh the unpleasant things, and, for this very reason, we tend to overlook them. Yet, even things apparently undesirable or evil can be made occasions for thanksgiving to God, since he never fails to extract from even the most unpromising situation some element which can be turned to our good.

We give thanks to God for his many blessings, and not the least for the opportunities he has given us of learning patience and forbearance through our adversities, and learning to know ourselves better; of learning, perhaps even in failure or neglect, that the only ultimate value in our lives is the love he has for us.

Thanksgiving Day offers us an opportunity to stop and express our appreciation for the preciousness of life, the goodness of life, the bounty given to us by God "Good measure: pressed down, running over."

*"Oh give thanks, unto the Lord for his mercy endures for ever."*

In His Peace,  
Pastor Schultz



WORSHIP

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

## From the President

We will soon begin our third year in the call process. Thus far we have had four call lists provided to us by President Johnson and have had two seminary students recommended to us by Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne Indiana. In total, the Call Committee has reviewed 23 candidates, interviewed 16 candidates, and have recommended six pastors to the congregation for a call. Six calls have been issued by the congregation. Two of these pastors have visited the church, but unfortunately all six of the calls have been declined.

In early October, the Call Committee met to discuss our plans for moving forward. Pastor Schultz shared some information concerning the number of LCMS congregations and the pastors serving these congregations. Currently there are 6,000 LCMS congregations with approximately 12% (720) having a pastoral vacancy. There are 9,494 rostered pastors in the LCMS. On the surface this looks like a good ratio of pastors to churches until you look at the age distribution of the pastors. 4,176 of these pastors are over age 65 (44%). The other 56% of the pastors are broken down as follows: 60 to 65 – 516 (5%), 50 to 60 – 1282 (13.5%), 40 to 50 – 1045 (11%), 30 to 40 – 755 (8%), and 20 to 30 – 124 (1%).

The Call Committee has focused primarily on pastors with five to seven years of experience when considering a pastor for a call. We have done this based on the current giving of the congregation since the salary associated with this experience level more closely reflects what the congregation can support. The committee has asked Pastor Schultz to contact the two seminaries and see if there are candidates in the 2024 class that might match well with our congregation. We hope that they will respond by the end of November. If candidates are identified, we will review and if felt to be a good match for the congregation, we will interview. If no candidates are identified in the seminaries, then we will request another call list from President Johnson. We would hopefully get a list by the first of the year. Either way, it appears that the earliest we can call another pastor is spring of 2024.

The Call Committee had hoped that we would have a new pastor by now and we are assured that God has chosen a man to be our new shepherd. It appears that God is not finished preparing this man for us, but we look forward to the day He provides him to us. We continue to be thankful for the retired pastors that God has provided to us as He continues preparing the one He has selected for us.

In Christ's service,  
Glen Thompson  
Congregational President & Call Committee Chairman

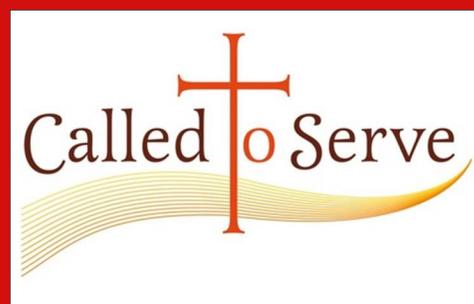
## Called to Serve and Celebrate Ministry

Jesus told a very interesting story about bags of gold. An owner was going away on a trip, called his servants and put his capital into their hands. One person was given five bags of gold, while another received two bags, and another person was handed but one bag of gold. Here the story sharpens, for it says “each according to his capacity.” We all know the story, for it is one of the most familiar parables of Christ, the end being what each did with what he had been given. To those who used well what they had been given, there was praise, but to the man who did nothing but hide what he had been given, there was harsh condemnation!

Each one of us has been given personal “bags of gold,” but of varying amounts. The issue is not how much we’ve been given, but what we do with what we’ve received. How much do you have? What are you doing with how little or how much you’ve been given? These questions are for each one of us. God has created each one of us with some talents. Such is the wonder and mystery of God’s creative activity that each human being is precious and unique and given some talents that others do not possess. This week, look seriously at yourself and ask, “What bag of gold has God given me ... and what am I doing with it?” One major part of our growing up in Christ as whole people is the discovery of our own strengths and how we might use them to glorify God and help others. You have been given something of great worth. What is it and what are you doing with it?

When God gives us life, we don’t know how much time we have to use. But whatever time we have is a gift from God and we must use it wisely, in every activity throughout the day.

Lorenza Robinson  
Called to Serve & Celebrate Ministry



## Fall Back!

**Daylight Saving Time ENDS  
Sunday, November 5 at 2:00 a.m.**

**Remember to set your clocks BACK one hour  
at bedtime the night before!**

## Deacons' Corner Extreme Makeover

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come."  
- 2 Corinthians 5:17*

Many things have changed in the world since our Lord created our foreparents Adam and Eve. We live in a world where things and man are constantly being changed. We are transforming ourselves as well as our attitudes into whatever fashion or form that we think right or desire. However, there are some things that have remained constant throughout the ages, and that is Our Lord's Word, His love, His forgiveness and compassion, His promises and patience with us through His Son. We were buried with Him in baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead, through the glory of the Father, we may live a new life.

Consequently, the capacity to see both our fellow man and Christ in their light, comes from this inner transformation achieved by being in Christ. This phase describes a mystical experience in which we live because Christ lives in us. "A man in Christ" is Paul's definition for a Christian. It implies an inner change which is equivalent to a new creation. A person in Christ is not merely improved or reformed, which implies no more than an external change, he is remade. He is different from what he was at his best. The old may refer to the desires and purposes of a self-centered life, the new the purposes of a Christ-centered life. The essential difference is an inner change wherein his thoughts and ambitions are no longer focused on himself but on Christ and the interest of others. The old has passed away ...The new has come.

There is a transformation of values. Hardship, suffering, disappointment, and misfortune have become the means of God's challenge, or of His discipline, like the tools of the potter which gives the cup its shape, both for use and to serve. As Jeremiah says, sometime the pot is marred in the potter's hand. Sometimes the pot does not do what it was designed to do. But the potter takes and breaks it and molds and makes it what he would have it be. Aren't we glad to know that when we are marred and broken, the Lord is not through with us yet? We should want him to re-create us. When we are in God's hand, we can then receive an extreme "**Makeover.**"

In His Service,  
Charles Craig  
Chairman, Board of Deacons

## Christ Care Ministry

### You are Mine

*But now thus says the Lord. He who created you, O Jacob, He who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.*

- Isaiah 43:1-3a

“Fear not.” This seems like an unreasonable request from God. To stand in the presence of our Creator and Judge as a broken and sinful creature should invoke the greatest of fear and shame.

Even so, the Lord does speak to us and His first words are not judgment but absolution and comfort: “*Fear not.*” Jesus spoke these words to Peter when he was terrified, as a sinful man, to be in Jesus’ presence. We cannot stand before God because of our own merits and deeds. Although we are sinful and unclean, we can stand without fear before God because He has redeemed us through Christ. He calls us to Himself by name, and our name is “*You are Mine.*”

We are first called by name in the waters of Holy Baptism. This washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit offers forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. God does not forget the promise He made to us in our Baptism.

We were buried into Christ’s death in our Baptism, but we were also raised to a new life in Him. This new life is not without hurt, trial, or temptation. In fact, our new life is beset with them, and the old fear creeps in on us. But the new promise of God is not for only one day. He guides us waking and guards us sleeping every day. Even when we are most vulnerable and unable to act. He does not leave us or forsake us. Anxious thoughts and the troubles of the world threaten to overwhelm us, but they cannot! It is not our own strength that quenches the fiery arrows of the devil. **It is the promise of the presence of God, who on the cross defeated the devil.** Our own strength will fail, but He never will. God is with us.

#### *Prayer*

*Heavenly Father, You have redeemed us with the holy precious blood of your Son. You have reconciled us to You in the waters of Holy Baptism. Guide and keep us in our lives as we meet trial and temptation. Strengthen our faith, that we may be ever mindful that You have called us by name and that we are Yours, through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

PAX,

Pastor Tom

\*\* Paraphrased from *Visitations - Resources for the Care of Souls* - Edited by Arthur A. Just, Jr. and Scot A. Kinnaman - © CPH 2008 - St. Louis, MO

## LWML News

### Painting the Planet Purple with Servanthood

*1942-2023 -- 81 YEARS of GOD*

A huge thank you to the family of First Lutheran Church for your support in celebrating LWML Sunday through your prayers, fellowship, and financial support. Your generosity will aid our 2023 mission projects (Lutheran World Relief—Earthquakes in Morocco and India, LCMS Maui Relief, and Community Food Bank of Central Alabama).

#### Sticky Note from God

*Dear Child of Mine,  
The deeper you  
seek **ME**  
The closer  
**I** will be....  
Jeremiah 29:13  
Love,  
Your Father*

#### A Prayer of Thanksgiving

*(Let us remember that we are in the Holy presence of God)*

*Heavenly Father, our Loving Creator,*

*We asked for strength, and You gave us difficulties to make us strong.*

*We asked for wisdom, and You gave us problems to solve.*

*We asked for prosperity, and You gave us purpose and brains to use.*

*We asked for courage, and You gave us fears to overcome.*

*We asked for patience, and You gave us situations where we were forced to wait.*

*We asked for love, and You gave us troubled people to help.*

*We asked for justice, and You called us to be just and to lead with integrity.*

*Lord, we have received nothing that we asked for or wanted.*

*And yet, we received everything that we needed.*

*For this, we give thanks.*

*-Written and offered by Dr. Colleen Hanycz*

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

Serve the **LORD** with gladness.

Sheree McGraw, President  
First Lutheran Church LWML



## Chrismon Workshop November 18

Do you want to make a Chrismon for your Christmas tree? First Lutheran will hold a Chrismon-making workshop for church members, friends, and neighbors Saturday, November 18 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. For a small \$5 donation, you'll get all the supplies and instructions on how to make your own Chrismon. And at the end of the workshop, you'll take your creation home for your own tree!

To reserve your spot, email [events@firstlutheranbham.org](mailto:events@firstlutheranbham.org).

To learn more about the history and tradition of the Chrismon tree, [click here](#).

Date: Saturday, November 18

Time: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Cost: \$5.00 donation

Reservations and/or questions: [events@firstlutheranbham.org](mailto:events@firstlutheranbham.org)



## First Lutheran on Instagram

Exciting News! First Lutheran is on Instagram!

We are thrilled to announce that we've taken the leap into the world of Instagram to further connect with our beloved congregation and share our faith journey with the world!

Follow us on Instagram @firstlutheranbham

Here's what you can expect from our Instagram page:

**Inspirational Messages:** Spiritual inspiration to uplift your heart and soul.

**Event Updates:** Stay in the loop about upcoming church events, workshops, and community gatherings.

**Community Spotlight:** Meet the wonderful members of our church family and learn about their faith stories.

**Behind-the-Scenes:** Get a glimpse of the people and passion that make our church a loving and welcoming community.

Help us spread the love and faith by following us, liking our posts, and sharing our content with your friends and family. Together, we can make a positive impact and continue to grow our church family.

# Joy of the Lord

*"We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us . . ."*  
- Romans 12:6

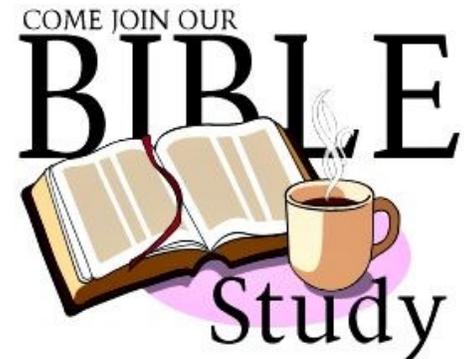


TO THE GLORY OF GOD!

## Bible Study Opportunities

- **Sunday Mornings** (in person at First Lutheran) - 9:00 a.m.
- **Wednesday Evenings** (via Zoom) - 5:30 p.m.
- **Saturday Mornings** (via Zoom) - 8:00 a.m.

If you are interested in participating in one of the Zoom studies, please email Pastor George Murdaugh at [georgeearl@hotmail.com](mailto:georgeearl@hotmail.com).



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

# *Evening Prayer*

✠ ENTER IN SILENCE ✠

✠ WORSHIP PRAYERFULLY ✠

✠ DEPART IN PEACE ✠





**FIRST LUTHERAN STAFF**

**INTERIM PASTOR**  
Rev. Kurtis Schultz

**OFFICE ADMINISTRATION**  
Rev. Kurtis Schultz

**MINISTRY COORDINATORS:**

**CHRIST CARE**  
Rev. Tom Lackey

**SERVE & CELEBRATE**  
Lorenza Robinson

**FACILITIES & PROPERTIES**  
Stan Weir

**WORSHIP/DEACONS**  
Charles Craig

**BROADCAST**  
June Weir

**FIRST IMPRESSIONS EDITOR**  
Heather Lackey

**Birthdays & Anniversaries**



- 11/1: Glen Thompson
- 11/2: Kurtis Schultz
- 11/3: Shane Harris
- 11/4: Anne Allen
- 11/10: Heather Lackey
- 11/12: Larry Donaldson
- 11/16: Jerry Graham
- 11/20: Derek Robinson
- 11/24: Trent Shiflett

- 11/4: Robert & Gwen Regulus
- 11/11: Stan & June Weir
- 11/26: Mali & Anja Mathru

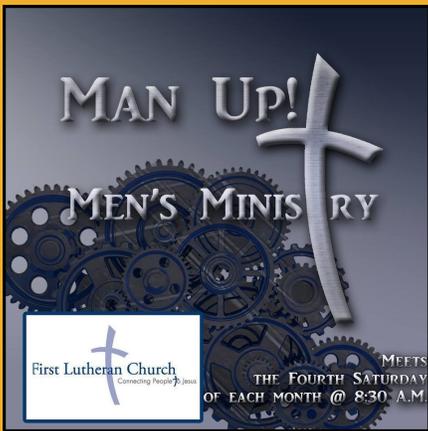
**Worship Team...November 2023**

**November 5**  
 Pastor: Tom Lackey  
 Worship Asst: Henry Mosley  
 Reader: Carol Lackey  
 Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris & James McGraw  
 Music: Larry Donaldson

**November 19**  
 Pastor: George Murdaugh  
 Worship Asst: Glen Thompson  
 Reader: Open  
 Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris & James McGraw  
 Music: Becky Schultz

**November 12**  
 Pastor: Tom Noon  
 Worship Asst: Mike Halbrooks  
 Reader: Frances Foy  
 Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris & James McGraw  
 Music: Larry Donaldson

**November 26**  
 Pastor: Tony Ramsey  
 Worship Asst: Anthony McGraw  
 Reader: Glen or Pat Thompson  
 Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris & James 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.

