

# 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 Called to Serve Ministry
- 5 Deacons' Corner
- 6 Christ Care Ministry
- 7 LWML News
- 8 Bible Study Opportunities
- 8 Joy of the Lord
- 8 Evening Prayer
- 9 Birthdays & Anniversaries
- 9 January Worship Team



### First Lutheran Church

2507 Highland Avenue  
Birmingham, AL 35205  
205.933.0380

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

[View our Church Calendar](#)



## Pastor's Pen A Prosperous New Year

*"Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, everything he has belongs to you." - Galatians 4:7*

Many of the cards we have received this past Christmas have included not only and "Merry Christmas" but also "A Happy New Year". Some well-wishers even add "Prosperous" to their blessing of our New Year. St. Paul shows us the connection between "Christmas" and "A Happy Prosperous New Year". He succinctly reviews what Jesus has done for us, and how we have been brought so close to God that we are adopted into his family. God is our Father, not a distant authoritative father of rules

*Continued on page 2*

## Local Events

**Through 1/14:** Dawoud Bey: The Birmingham Project, Birmingham Museum of Art; [www.artsbma.org](http://www.artsbma.org)

**Through 1/15:** Glow Wild 2023: An Animal Lantern Celebration, Birmingham Zoo; [www.birminghamzoo.com](http://www.birminghamzoo.com)

**Through 3/10:** American Selections: The Vulcan Materials Company Collection, Birmingham Museum of Art; [www.artsbma.org](http://www.artsbma.org)

**1/5-6:** ASO Masterworks presents *Ravishing Rachmaninoff*, Alys Stephens Center; [www.alabamasymphony.org](http://www.alabamasymphony.org)

**1/19 & 1/21:** *Touch*, presented by Opera Birmingham and featuring the Alabama Symphony Orchestra, Red Mountain Theatre Art Campus; [www.operabirmingham.org](http://www.operabirmingham.org)

**1/26-27:** ASO Masterworks presents Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto, Alys Stephens Center; [www.alabamasymphony.org](http://www.alabamasymphony.org)



*(cont'd from p. 1)*

and stipulations, but one who cares for us, his precious children, the same way he cares for his Son, Jesus.

Part of letting God care for us and allowing ourselves to be open to his moving in our lives, is realizing that not only what we have is his, but what he has is ours. The more literal translations say that we are heirs with him, but being an heir means much more than waiting for a future inheritance in heaven. As children of God and heirs we can fully take part right now in the ongoing life of the kingdom of heaven. As heirs we are actively included in God's family, so that when our inheritance is fully received, we will be comfortable with it and ready to use it responsibly. The father in Jesus' parable of the prodigal son said it very clearly to his eldest son, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours" (Luke 15:31).

It is quite astounding to realize that everything God has is ours, and since he is God that means there is no end to what he has in store for us. Of course we can handle only so much now, given our earthly limitations, but what we do receive is given in preparation for our receiving the whole inheritance. In the meantime, we need to take advantage of the heavenly wealth which belongs to us and which is ours for the asking. Our maturity in the faith depends upon it, because the more we explore what God has for us, the closer we are led to him. The more we know him truly as Father, the more we become liberated from our old patterns old isolation. The more we discover the riches of heaven, the more we have to give freely of ourselves.

Yes, it is hard to believe that everything that God has is ours and that God wants to give us as much as we can accept. His generosity knows no bounds. The proof of it is that God gave his Son, who gave his life, so that we might be one with God and be brought into the loving circle of his family.

We have a "Happy and Prosperous New Year" ahead of us!

*My Father in heaven, thank you for your love and care and gifts which keep me aware that I will someday enter into my full inheritance. Help me to live more in the reality of the boundless wealth of your kingdom each day. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

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

At the December 10, 2023 Voters Meeting, a proposed budget for 2024 of \$222,668 was presented. \$153,396 of the budget was allocated to the Board of Deacons followed by the Board of Trustees with \$59,160. The Deacons budget is primarily pastoral salary and benefits of \$127,890 and worship related expenses of approximately \$25,000. The Trustee's expenses are primarily utilities, insurance, minor maintenance, and custodial costs. When we have a full-time pastor, 95% of our budgetary expenses will be from these two boards.

In 2024 we are projecting a total income of \$166,355 leaving us with a deficit of \$56,313 if we had a full-time pastor as of January 1, 2024. The Board of Directors presented the deficit budget so that the congregation would be aware of the needs of the church and that people could prayerfully respond to these needs.

Expanding the kingdom of God is our primary mission and preserving the ministry of First Lutheran Church in Birmingham, Alabama is part of that mission. We need to support not only the pastoral spiritual side of the church but also the physical plant. We need to be good stewards of the resources and assets that God has provided to us. Recent repairs and upgrades have been made possible by taking funds that normally would support the pastor and using them to replace the heating and air conditioning system and the roof over the fellowship hall.

In the Voters Meeting, Stan Weir, Chairman of the Trustees discussed three projects that the members need to consider. They are as follows: replacing the ceiling in the fellowship hall due to water leaks for \$60,000; replacing the acoustic ceiling in the sanctuary for \$150,000; and replacing the roof over the sanctuary for \$108,000. The Board of Directors has considered all these projects and will bring them to the voters as funds are available. The Board does not believe it is in the best interest of the church to acquire loans to complete these projects at this time and the Board prefers to pay for them as funds are available.

The Call Committee is planning to present a call for consideration to the voters on January 14, 2024. The committee has interviewed four candidates that appear to be a good match to the congregation. The committee is also awaiting possible seminary candidates who can be considered. By January 14, a decision will be made who to recommend to the congregation. The committee's plan is to have the prospective pastor visit the congregation before the beginning of Lent and have a decision from the pastor by the end of February.

*(continued on p. 4)*

*(cont'd from p. 3)*

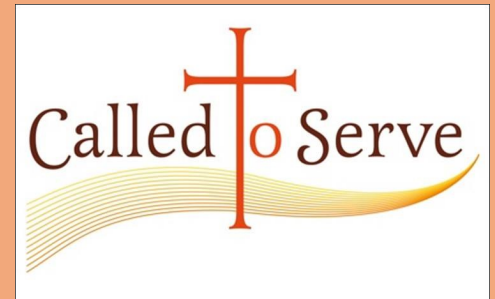
One last note, an online worshipper who is not a member of our congregation has started the process of setting up an endowment for our congregation. They are making an initial gift of \$10,000 to Legacy Deo. Legacy Deo (legacydeo.org) is an endowment fund manager associated with the Southern District. A perpetual endowment fund to be known as First Lutheran Church Mission and Ministry Endowment Fund is being established. Additional gifts to the endowment can be made by anyone and when the endowment reaches at least \$100,000 in assets, the fund manager will begin making annual distributions to the church based off the annual earnings of the fund. The distributions will be used to support the church's ministry and where the funds are used will be left to the discretion of the Board of Directors of the church. We thank God for this extraordinary gift!

In Christ's service,

Glen Thompson  
Congregational President and Chairman of the Call Committee

## **Called to Serve and Celebrate Ministry No Pockets for Our Stuff**

It is a fact that we all came into this world, at birth, with nothing. No pockets or handbags to carry our stuff. All that we have from birth to death has been a gift from God. It is also fact that when we leave this earth, we will take nothing with us. There are no pockets or handbags with our spiritual eternal life. Stewardship is how we manage what God has given us in this life. Stewardship is not a choice that we make. As recipients of God's gifts, we become stewards. The choice we have is to choose to be "good stewards" or "poor stewards." What is your choice? If we choose to be good stewards, we will realize that all we have comes from God. We will manage our gifts as taught by Jesus. Thus, we move from being good stewards to being good Christian stewards. Stewardship will become a way of life rather than an uneasy subject. If we choose to do nothing about God's gifts, or if we choose to regard them as our own, we will be unfaithful stewards. Our god will become our material possessions and we may discover a life that reflects greed and self-centeredness. Start by giving your Lord his portion first. Make that a habit. Never become a resentful giver, always thinking of the pleasures you could afford if only God didn't get his portion first. Find joy in your giving. What a privilege it is to contribute to bringing God's Kingdom upon this earth. Choose today what kind of steward you will be!



Lorenza Robinson  
Called to Serve & Celebrate Ministry

## Deacons' Corner 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 Service,  
Charles Craig  
Chairman, Board of Deacons



## Christ Care Ministry Seek and Ye Shall Find

*“When you search for Me, you will find Me if you seek Me with all your heart.”*  
-Jeremiah 29:13

We are all seekers. The way we live, the decisions we make, the company we keep, the topics of our conversations, etc. - all reflect, to one degree or another, what we seek and whom we seek. There are those so deeply steeped in nostalgia that what they seek is either to recreate the past or to lament its passing in an ostentatious way. Others seek pleasure ferociously, while others seek possessions unceasingly. Others seek to be noticed, while not a few seek solitude. We're all seekers. But those who seek first the company of our Savior God are noted for their lack of anxiety, the absence of excessive complications, the affection they have for family and friends, the simplicity of their routines, their ease with themselves and others, the ease with which they smile, the joy they take in simple things, especially in the beauty of nature, as well as their zeal in helping others, whether family or friends or strangers (the latter who may live in poverty and hopelessness). What we seek and whom we seek define who we are. Those who seek God are godly. Not perfect, but godly. And they find Him. Not always quickly, but God does not play hide & seek; therefore, if He is not found according to our timeframe, it is for a reason that will benefit us in due season. Those who seek God will find Him because God also seeks us. He is our Abba Father, our Lord and Savior, our Redeemer, our Sustainer and Shepherd, our Strength and Stay. He does not keep His distance for long; in the context of eternity, His “absence” is but a fraction of a second.

God is love. And love cannot be hoarded, buried, or kept long at a distance. It must be given. It demands to be given. Its strength and increase come with being given away. Love is the essence of God. He is the Source and Giver of love. He longs for His children to seek Him, and He in turn seeks His children that they may receive the fullness of His love. There is nothing more significant, nothing more rewarding, nothing more meaningful, nothing more life-changing, nothing more lasting than to encounter God. That is the first and final reason we have life: to find God, our Abba Father, whom we seek - and who seeks us. Soli Deo Gloria!

Stay in God's Peace,  
Pastor Tom

*\* Paraphrased from the Commentaries of Rev. Dr. Norman H. McCrummen, III*

## From the Treasurer

Please note that some offering envelope numbers may be changing for 2024 to allow us to better arrange the system. Be sure to throw away any unused offering envelopes after December 31, 2023. Thank you!

## LWML News

### Painting the Planet **Purple** with Servanthood

**1942-2023 -- 81 YEARS of GOD**



#### SOMETHING NEW

*"I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland." Isaiah 43: 19 NLT*

Whether you have generated a color-coded list of goals, dreams, and an execution plan for the next 365 days or you've banned resolutions and vowed to make this just another day on the calendar, the clean slate represented by the first day of a new year is filled with an undeniable air of expectation. The excitement of a new bauble or gadget pales in comparison to the promise of a new beginning. Deep down inside, there is a part of us which thinks, "This could be my year!"

Guess what? It is your year. This day, and every one that follows, is yours. It is yours to choose who and how to love, to serve, and even to be. I hope your choice is to take this journey in the company of your Heavenly Father.

**Heavenly Father, I give you this year. I ask that you would help me keep you in the forefront of my mind as I make the decisions and plans. I want to seek your advice in everything I set my hand to. Thank You. In Jesus name I pray.**

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

- Sunday Mornings (in person at First Lutheran) - 9:00 a.m.
- Wednesday Evenings (via Zoom) - 6:30 p.m.
- Saturday Mornings (via Zoom) - 9:00 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).

*Joy of the  
Lord*

  
Stewardship  
*A way of living*

**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



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  
Currently on Record**

## Worship Team...January 2024

### January 7

Pastor: George Murdaugh  
Worship Asst: Glen Thompson  
Reader: Wendy Harris  
Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris &  
James McGraw  
Music: Larry Donaldson

### January 21

Pastor: Tom Lackey  
Worship Asst: Anthony McGraw  
Reader: Judy Drews  
Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris &  
James McGraw  
Music: Becky Schultz

### January 14

Pastor: Tom Noon  
Worship Asst: Mike Halbrooks  
Reader: Eva Hill  
Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris &  
James McGraw  
Music: Larry Donaldson

### January 28

Pastor: Tony Ramsey  
Worship Asst: Charles Craig  
Reader: James McGraw  
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.**

