

FIRST Impressions

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A Publication of First Lutheran Church • Birmingham, AL

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[View our Church Calendar](#)



Pastor's Pen Traveling on the Low Road

Jesus said, "Blessed are you who are poor." - Luke 6:20b

I have a friend who once noted in surprise, "When I first believed, I thought I understood the kingdom of God – but now that I have entered more deeply into my Christian walk, I realize I was looking at a negative: the blacks are white and the whites are black. Everything in this life is opposite of what I expected."

Is this not true in what Jesus says in the Gospel for the Sixth Sunday after

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Local Events

2/1-18: Stephen Sondheim's *Into the Woods*, Virginia Samford Theatre; www.virginiasmamfordtheatre.org

2/9 - 3/3: *The Color Purple*, Red Mountain Theatre; www.redmountaintheatre.org

2/10-11: ASO presents *Rhapsody in Blue at 100: A Gershwin Celebration*, Alys Stephens Center; www.alabamasymphony.org

2/17 - 8/18: *Heroes and Villains: The Art of the Disney Costume*, Birmingham Museum of Art; www.artsbma.org

2/19: Vienna Boys Choir, Samford University's Wright Center; www.samford.edu/wrightcenter/events/

2/23-25: Alabama Ballet presents *Giselle*, BJCC; www.alabamaballet.org



(cont'd from p. 1)

Epiphany? “Blessed are you who are poor...Blessed are you who are hungry now...Blessed are you who weep now...” (Luke 6:20-21). One would have expected the opposite: misery for the poor, the hungry, and the sad. With money we can buy what we want, with a full stomach we can focus on other matters, with diversions we can forget our problems and enjoy life. What a contrast between Jesus’ goals and those of the world we live in!

The poverty of which Jesus speaks is poverty of spirit, as Matthew interprets it (5:3). The poor are those who know their need of God, their dependence on his grace, his guidance, his love. The hungry are those who long for God’s goodness in their hearts, and his way to be observed between nations in our world. Those who weep are the earnest hearers of others, who listen without condemnation and enter another’s pain, offering a hand up, a word of truth, or questions whose answers lead to God.

The way of Christ is not one of triumphalism, nor of winning, not of being on top. It is the path of serving, of allowing others first place over oneself. Instead of climbing a ladder of hierarchy, Christians dance in a circle of peers. Rather than putting others down, we put others up. These are the ways to the blessings of God.

Grant us your gracious Spirit, O Lord, that we may find your way none other than the way of blessing and of peace; in Jesus’ name. Amen

In His Peace,
Pastor Schultz

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.



WORSHIP

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

From the President

During December, the Call Committee completed interviewing all the pastors that were on our call list that had consented to an interview. We had hoped to get pastoral candidate names from the seminaries by early December and to have an opportunity to interview them while they were out on Christmas break. This did not happen and we are again hopeful that we will hear from the seminaries before February 1 and can interview them as soon as possible. The goal is to issue a call during February. A two-week voters meeting notice will be posted when the Call Committee's recommendation for a pastor has been approved by the Board of Directors and referred to the voters for approval.

The church council is working on plans for the first half of 2024. Lent begins on February 14 with Ash Wednesday and goes through Easter on March 31. Please plan to attend the weekly pre-service meals and the worship services on Wednesday nights. Board of Director's elections will be held in June. Positions up for election include the president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and two members-at-large. The Board of Deacons is the official nominating committee for the church. Anyone interested in running for a Board of Directors position should contact Charles Craig, chair of the deacons, to declare their interest.

In Christ's service,

Glen Thompson
Congregational President and Chairman of the Call Committee

Joy of
the
Lord



Called to Serve and Celebrate Ministry Live 2 Give

Waiting for a red light to turn green, my eye caught some bold graffiti on a corner telephone pole. "I live 2 give," was the large black spray-painted message. "Well, that's different," I thought to myself. In incongruity of a generous thought delivered by means of a careless defacing of property became apparent. What makes a gift a real gift? I wondered what kinds of gifts does this person "live to give?" And what types of "gifts" are unwelcome ones ... graffiti? thoughtlessness? cheap attention-getters? What makes a gift a real gift? How about quality control! And before judging another, how about my own kind of gifts and my own quality control? Who sets my standard? Because God gives first to you and to me, giving should be a response to God's loving gifts. God's gifts set the standard! My gifts cannot be on a par with God's gifts to me, but my gifts, large or small, can be my way of showing love and glorifying God. With the best of intentions, I should give my best, knowing that God's grace will overcome my inadequacy. Hopefully, I, too, "can live 2 give," but live to give my best to God and others!

Every person receives from God some special ability or quality that can be used to build the church, so it may become more effective in its mission to reach and transform the world. If you have committed yourself to Jesus Christ, then God has committed to your care some special gift or gifts: an ability, a talent, or a quality of personality that God expects you to use in service of the kingdom.

Lorenza Robinson
Called to Serve & Celebrate Ministry



Special Voter's Meeting

Sunday, February 4
Immediately After Worship

Agenda:
Approval to Issue a Pastoral Call

Deacons' Corner

Struggling with Sin - Romans 7

We have seen cartoons depicting temptation. On one shoulder of a person sits the devil with horns and a pitchfork and on the other sits a halo-crowned angel. No one can predict which one will prevail. True enough, we are both saints and sinners at the same time. However, it has been said by a poet most people live lives in “quiet desperation.” He catches the tension that is within each of us by placing the word “quiet” and the word “desperation” side by side. The “quiet” side may simply have to do with not attracting attention. But to put “quiet” beside “desperation” indicates a struggle that has all kinds of implications. What about the “desperation” part? It could be a sense of insecurity, real or imagined. It could be a multitude of predicaments. But with all the ways society deals with our lives of “quiet desperation,” it cannot fill the spiritual vacuum that is often apparent. We are more than flesh and blood. It is in making that claim and finding that value we begin to deal with the real issues of our lives.

On the other hand, Paul is talking about the conflict that rages within him. He knows that sin is the culprit and the conflict between good and evil is really a conflict between the power of Satan and the power of the Spirit, the quiet and not so quiet desperation that was a part of his life, as well as our lives. This gets us back to the power of sin and the summary he writes about in Romans: “I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do want is what I do.” How many times do we know the “good” and don’t do it or we know the “evil” for what it is and take part in it? What keeps us from doing right or urges us to do wrong? The same answer applies to both, it is SIN. But sin is not the super-monster we would like to think it is. It does not make us do anything we do not agree to, submit to, or consent to. Sin may entice us and deceive us, but in the end the decision of what we do or not do is ours, along with the consequences. We sin because it suits our purposes.

In His Service,
Charles Craig
Chairman, Board of Deacons

Christ Care Ministry

The Wisdom of Our Elders

“Consider the years long past. Ask your father and mother and they will teach you; ask your elders, and they will explain to you.” (Deuteronomy 32:7)

Having spent time as a young lad in a small country town in northwest Tennessee, I remember many a day spent in my granddad’s small country store surrounded by much older gentlemen including my dad, all sitting around a pot-bellied stove listening to conversations from the old men. There were numerous subjects ranging from politics, religion, and baseball to the local news in the *Weakley County Press* which came out ... weekly (no pun intended). I have great memories from those days’ past and from the old ones.

My debt to my elders - now in Heaven - is incalculable. I literally sat at their feet listening to every word they said. Now there are few people older than I am, but when I find them, I know that from them I can learn much. I miss the elders of my youth terribly. I miss my grandparents, my great-aunts and uncles, teachers, my parents. God alone knows how much I miss my parents. They were all people of many stories. I owe to them my love of history. From a very early age I hung on to their every word of years gone by. It seems today that the young are too busy to listen to anyone. They are enslaved to their iPhones and to “organized play” and to distractions beyond number. There are, of course, remarkable exceptions, and they stand out like the brightest stars in the heavens. The point is, as the Scriptures remind us, that with age much has been experienced and learned, and there is much to share and teach.

When I last saw my then elderly childhood Sunday School teacher some years back, I asked him if he was still teaching. He said, “Of course! I’m not going to stop teaching Sunday School. Why would I do that? I know more now than I’ve ever known!” In biblical days, the elders of a city sat at its gates, and people would go to them and sit among them asking for their counsel. How different would be our world today if the elderly were sought for their wisdom. We all come to learn that time passes with lightning speed.

The old are here today and gone tomorrow, and when they go, they take with them the wisdom that was theirs, unless they had the opportunity to share (to leave behind) what they knew of God and the ways of His people. Apart from the relationships in which love is kindled, what is more precious than time? What is more important than “growing up into wisdom” and sharing wisdom with the young? With whatever time is left, let us pass on to others what we have learned, let us love more freely and deeply, and trust our Father God more fervently. Listen to their every word and hug them. They need love too.

Stay in God’s Peace,
Pastor Tom

2024 Lent Series

Join us for the Guided to the Cross special service for Ash Wednesday, as we are drawn to Calvary to receive forgiveness. In word and song, we contemplate how to live lives of forgiving one another as we have been forgiven by Christ through the cross.

Week 1: Guided to Hope

For Week 1 of Lent, we are drawn to Calvary to receive hope. In word and song, we contemplate how to live lives of hope as we remember that Christ went to the cross to save us forevermore.

Week 2: Guided to Love

For Week 2 of Lent, we are drawn to Calvary to receive love. In word and song, we contemplate how to live lives of love in response to the love Christ showed us on the cross.

Week 3: Guided to Peace

For Week 3 of Lent, we are drawn to Calvary to receive peace. In word and song, we contemplate how to live lives of peace in our hearts, souls and minds through Christ, who brought peace between us and God by the cross.

Week 4: Guided to Trust

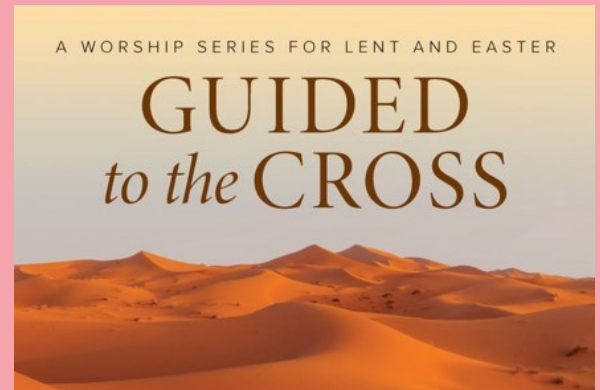
For Week 4 of Lent, we are drawn to Calvary to deepen our trust. In word and song, we contemplate how to live lives of trust in God, who entrusted his Son, Jesus, on the cross for our sake.

Week 5: Guided to Perseverance

For Week 5 of Lent, we are drawn to Calvary to grow in perseverance. In word and song, we contemplate how to live lives of perseverance in the midst of strife in the name of Jesus, who endured the cross to the very end for us all.

Palm Sunday: Guided to Humility

Join us for Palm Sunday, as Jesus enters into Jerusalem in humility on his way to Calvary. In word and song, we contemplate how to live lives of humility, guided by Christ and the cross.



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(2024 Lent Series - cont'd from p. 7)

Maundy Thursday: Guided to Service

Join us for Maundy Thursday, as Jesus washes the disciples' feet in service to them on his way to Calvary. In word and song, we contemplate how to live lives of service, guided by Christ and the cross.

Easter Sunday: Guided to New Life

Join us Easter Sunday, as the crucified Christ is raised from the dead to new life. In word and song, we contemplate how to live a new life, guided by the risen Christ.

LWML News

Painting the Planet **Purple with Servanthood**

1942-2024 -- 82 YEARS of GOD



Return to Your REST
Psalm 116:7

The LWML Central Alabama Zone invites you to the
40th Biennial Gulf States District Convention

Montgomery Marriott/Prattville Hotel & Conference Center
April 26-27, 2024

For more information go to <https://www.lwmlgulfstates.org>

Sticky Note from GOD:

*Dear Child of Mine
Let ME
be the guide
of your steps . . .
Proverbs 16:9
Love,
Your Father*

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

Sheree McGraw, President
First Lutheran Church LWML

Lent / Holy Week Schedule of Events 2024

February 14:	Ash Wednesday Worship - 6:00 p.m.
February 18:	First Sunday of Lent
Wednesdays February 21 - March 20:	Lent Midweek Activities Soup Supper - 5:15 p.m.; Worship - 6:00 p.m.
March 24:	Palm Sunday Worship - 10:15 a.m. (gather on front steps for Procession of Palms)
March 28:	Maundy Thursday Worship - 6:00 p.m.
March 29:	Good Friday Tenebrae Service - 6:00 p.m.
March 31:	Easter Sunday - The Resurrection of our Lord Breakfast - 8:45 a.m. Easter Egg Hunt - 9:15 a.m. Easter Worship - 10:15 a.m.



**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



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

2/9: Dan & Lynn Phifer

Worship Team...February 2024

February 4

Pastor: Kurtis Schultz

Worship Asst: Henry Mosley

Reader: Sheree McGraw

Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris &
James McGraw

Music: Larry Donaldson

February 18

Pastor: George Murdaugh

Worship Asst: Mike Halbrooks

Reader: Frances Foy

Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris &
James McGraw

Music: Becky Schultz

February 11

Pastor: Tom Noon

Worship Asst: Glen Thompson

Reader: Carol Lackey

Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris &
James McGraw

Music: Larry Donaldson

February 25

Pastor: Tony Ramsey

Worship Asst: Anthony McGraw

Reader: Nic Ford

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.

