

# FIRST Impressions

## What's INSIDE

A Publication of First Lutheran Church · Birmingham, AL

- 1 Pastor's Pen
- 1 Church Calendar Link
- 1 Local Events
- 2 Bible Study Opportunities
- 3 President's Letter
- 4 Evening Prayer
- 5 Called to Serve Ministry
- 5 Man UP! Ministry
- 6 Deacon's Corner
- 7 LWML News
- 8 Christ Care Ministry
- 9 Multi-Family Yard Sale
- 10 Coming Attractions
- 10 Joy of the Lord
- 11 Birthdays & Anniversaries
- 11 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 Easter Tears

*Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" -John 20:15*

I have discovered that my eyes tear up at movies more often than they used to. Perhaps it is that I am just getting older and closer to heaven. Recently I noticed there are three kind of scenes that bring a lump to my throat and make my eyes well up. The first are quite sad, others are actually quite happy, and a third kind is neither sad nor happy, but scenes brimming with nostalgia. My reaction in all three cases suggested that I was more than a distant observer. I was there.

*Continued on page 2*

## Local Events

**Through 8/18:** *Heroes and Villains: The Art of the Disney Costume*, Birmingham Museum of Art; [www.artsbma.org](http://www.artsbma.org)

**4/5-6:** Alabama Symphony Masterworks presents *Masters of the Silver Screen*, Alys Stephens Center; [www.alabamasymphony.org](http://www.alabamasymphony.org)

**4/11-21:** *Schoolhouse Rock Live!*, Virginia Samford Theatre; [www.virginiasamfordtheatre.org](http://www.virginiasamfordtheatre.org)

**4/12:** Spring Plant Sale, Birmingham Botanical Gardens; [www.bbgardens.org](http://www.bbgardens.org)

**4/20-21:** Alabama Symphony SuperPOPS! presents *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* in Concert, BJCC; [www.alabamasymphony.org](http://www.alabamasymphony.org)

**4/26-28:** 41st Annual Magic City Art Connection and Corks & Chefs, Sloss Furnaces; [www.magiccityart.com](http://www.magiccityart.com)



(cont'd from p. 1)

There is a tradition within the church which considers tears to be a gift of God, and the shedding of tears an expression of some of our deepest affections for God --- repentance, longing, joy, love. When something (or someone) touches our lives, deeply enough to cause us to cry; we know that more than our mind is engaged in the relationship. In some way, we have given over our hearts. This was surely the case with Mary Magdalene. Her early morning search for Jesus was driven by a love which could not let him go, even in death. We can only imagine the sorrow which had torn at her soul as she watched her Lord suffer and die (Mark 15:40). Finding that his tattered body, placed in the tomb so carefully two nights before, was now absent from its resting place, must have broken her heart. Of course she wept. She was no distant observer. Jesus was her life, her love.

We have heard the Easter message probably more times than we can count. The risk of such familiarity, of course, is that the resurrection of Jesus Christ becomes a ‘matter-of-fact’ announcement. We were not there, nor can we recreate the event no matter how many times it has been scripted and acted. Are we simply distant observers? I think not. This Easter season, let us recall that Jesus has taken over our hearts. Let us remember that we have met this Person, that sometimes we wish he were here by our side, and that we know he is alive. And, if anyone wonders why eyes well up as we hear the Gospel readers proclaim: “Now on the first day of the week,” or as we sing: “Jesus Christ is risen today,” we can tell them, “Because this is all about my Lord.”

**Prayer:** *Dear Jesus, thank you that I am not a distant observer of Easter and for the gift that allows me to express the depth of your love for me. 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](mailto:georgeearl@hotmail.com).



## From the President

As we enter the season of Easter, we begin to look forward to spring and summer. Over the next few months, the church will offer opportunities for church members to strengthen bonds within our congregation and reach out into the surrounding community. Read on for several updates on these activities and other happenings in our congregation.

**Man Up Men's Group.** The Man Up men's group is coming back to life on April 27. Since Covid this group has been inactive, but it's time for the men's fellowship group to again begin functioning. The first meeting is Saturday April 27 at 8:00 AM at the church. All men are encouraged to attend. The meeting will begin with a prepared breakfast and will be followed by Bible study and a kitchen work project. A sign-up sheet will be posted on one of the bulletin boards. Please sign up by April 21 so we'll know how many to plan for breakfast.

**Yard Sale.** On May 18, the church is sponsoring a yard sale. We will send the neighborhood information about the sale and we hope to generate their interest in participating. This low-stress evangelical activity is a great opportunity for us to meet and interact with the neighborhood. Please come, be yourself, and get to know our neighbors. If you would like to help or would like to have a table at the sale, contact Wendy Harris.

**Game Night & Movie Night.** During the summer, the church is sponsoring a family game night and a movie night on the lawn. These activities are again designed to be fun for our congregants but also a low-stress outreach to the neighborhood. What better opportunity do you have to have fun, be yourself, and reach out for Jesus? June Weir is coordinating these events. Please see her to volunteer to help.

**Pastoral Call.** On March 21 Pastor Rusche returned our call to him. While this is the seventh call that has been returned to us, we should not be discouraged. The Call Committee recognizes that God has chosen a man to be our next pastor and that he will be revealed to us in God's perfect time. While we would like for our next pastor to be made known sooner rather than later, we wait on the Lord. Please pray for the Call Committee as they seek our next shepherd.

**Board Elections.** On June 2 we will hold elections for the Board of Directors. The offices up for election are President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and 2 Members-at-Large. If you are interested in serving in one of these positions or want to nominate someone for a position, please see Charles Craig.

*(cont'd on p. 4)*

*(cont'd from p. 3)*

**Digital Ministry Update.** Our digital/virtual ministry of the church continues to expand. At the March meeting of the church council, June Weir shared that the church is active on four virtual platforms: Google Business Page, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. All four platforms continue to grow in number of searches, the number of followers, and our total reach. For example, our reach on YouTube is up to 28,500 people while the number of subscribers is up to 154 – a 32% increase from July 2023. God is indeed using the virtual ministry to reach people and I thank June Weir and Ginger Reeves for developing, leading, and nurturing this medium for the glory of God.

In God's service,

Glen Thompson  
Congregational President and Chairman of the Call Committee

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

*Evening Prayer*

✠ ENTER IN SILENCE ✠

✠ WORSHIP PRAYERFULLY ✠

✠ DEPART IN PEACE ✠



## Called to Serve and Celebrate Ministry

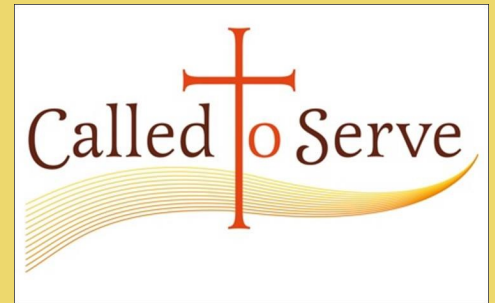
The Old Testament prophet Haggai records these words of God speaking to the Jews who were about to build a temple in which to worship: “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the Lord.” The writer of the 24th psalm made the same point when he wrote: “The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it.” So that compels us to ask, if ultimately God’s owns everything, where does that leave us?

The answer Scripture gives us is very clear. We are care takers of God’s earth and all that is in it. We are stewards, or managers, who have the responsibility of caring for the earth and for whatever God blesses us with. Not only responsible for this earth, but our bodies, minds, and the resources that come our way. Because ultimately what we say is ours is not ours at all.

There is an old joke about two men standing on a street corner when a funeral procession came into view. They were respectfully silent until they noticed that somehow a Brinks truck had gotten right behind the hearse. That was when one fellow said to the other, “Who says you can't take it with you?” Well, the sober truth is we really can't take it with us. Yet there is a lot we can do with what God allows us to manage right now. We are the servants of the Lord. So let's be the best caretakers of whatever the Lord has placed before us.

*Prayer: Dear Lord, you have given us such great responsibilities. Please give us the guidance and strength to do what we can do for your Kingdom! Amen*

Lorenza Robinson  
Called to Serve & Celebrate Ministry



## Man Up! Men's Ministry

**Saturday, April 27**

After a long hiatus, Man Up! will resume **Saturday, April 27 at 8:00 a.m.** at the church. All men are invited and encouraged to attend. We'll begin with a prepared breakfast, followed by a short Bible study and a kitchen work project. A sign-up sheet will be posted on one of the bulletin boards. Please sign up by April 21 so we'll know how many to plan for breakfast. Contact Glen Thompson with any questions.



## Deacons' Corner Things Above

*“Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth.”*

*- Colossians 3:2*

The Apostle Paul says to us that we should set our minds on things above and not the things on the earth. Yet we are not to despise the things of the earth, but the things of the earth should not be our main focus. Everything created by God is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving. The things of this earth are to support our physical life, to enable us to perform the tasks given us by the Lord. As a matter of fact, we should view things as they appear to us naturally in reference to God and eternity. Of course, many of us are self-centered and earthly things become a way of life for them. As Christians, our focus at all times should be striving after the possessions of the invisible, eternal, holy, heavenly world of God, on the eternal blessing which the exalted Christ has prepared for us above. We should not be earth-bound in outlook.

In His Service,  
Charles Craig  
Chairman, Board of Deacons

*Joy of  
the Lord*

1 Timothy 6:18-19



**You Can't Take It With You,  
But You Can Send It Ahead**

## LWML News

### Painting the Planet Purple with Servanthood

*1942-2024 -- 82 YEARS of GOD*



This month, Prattville, AL will be painted in **PURPLE!**

### 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, visit <https://www.lwmlgulfstates.org>

### Sticky Note from GOD

Dear Child of Mine,

Always do what

You know is

right and good . . .

-James 4:17

Love,

Your Father

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

Sheree McGraw, President  
First Lutheran LWML

**WORSHIP**

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

## Christ Care Ministry

### The Joyful Parting

*“Then He [Jesus] led them out as far as Bethany and lifting up His hands, He blessed them. While He blessed them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped them and returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were in the temple blessing God.”*

*-- Luke 24:51-53*

We spend a lot of time with “good-byes,” don’t we? Saying “so long” and “farewell” brings both tears of joy and sadness. It can be so hard to do at times, especially when we experience the loss of a loved one and are left standing, often alone, by a graveside.

But the **parting** Of Jesus - *The Ascension of our Lord* - (Luke 24: 44-53) was not as sad as the words sound. At worst, it was only a physical parting. No longer would the disciples see Jesus in person. But it was not a complete parting or total separation. The above text makes it clear that His guiding, protecting, and empowering presence would be with them as they carried on His mission. Jesus made it even more explicit in Matthew’s account, “*And behold, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age*” (Matt. 28:20 ESV). That, beloved, is the Gospel of the ascension, namely that Christ can return to heaven because His implementation of God’s salvation plan is finished, and the disciples can herald that plan to the world with Jesus still being with them, even in them (John 14:18, 20), to empower their witness. No wonder the disciples did not grieve at this parting but “*returned to Jerusalem with great joy*’ (v.52).

But it will enhance the Gospel of the ascension if we let the words of verse 51, “*he parted from them.*” remind us of another parting, that parting which is the very foundation of the Gospel. I refer to the parting of Father from Son at the cross. There Jesus was parted from God. And this parting was every bit as sad (from God's perspective) as the despairing cry of Jesus indicates, “*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*” (Matt. 27:46). The Son, laden with our sins, was indeed parted from His Father. Jesus was damned for us. Here the parting was complete, the separation total.

That’s what it took to save us, beloved. That parting at Bethany called the ascension, takes on its full meaning in the light of that parting at Calvary called the damnation. And that’s why we can join the disciples in their great joy, praising and blessing God.

God be praised!  
PAX,  
Pastor Tom L.

*Paraphrased from Gospel Handles - Finding New Connections in Biblical Texts - Francis C. Rossow - CPH © 2001*



## Multi-Family Spring Yard Sale Saturday, May 18, 9 am – 3 pm

Location: First Lutheran Church Lawn & Parking Lot  
2507 Highland Avenue South, Birmingham, AL

### One Man's Trash is Another Man's Treasure!

First Lutheran Church is hosting a neighborhood yard sale on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 9 am until 1 pm. Anyone interested in participating may reserve a table for a \$25 donation made payable to First Lutheran Church. If you would like to volunteer to help or if you have any questions, please contact Wendy Harris at 205-706-9229. If you would like to participate in the yard sale, please email [events@firstlutheranbham.org](mailto:events@firstlutheranbham.org).

**Table Request Form.** Please complete this form and return with your donation of \$25. Your space will be confirmed upon receipt of your donation. Payment can be made on our website at [www.FirstLutheranBham.org](http://www.FirstLutheranBham.org). Select "Give Now" and designate "Spring Yard Sale." Table location assignments are based on the order received. A table (8' long) and chair will be provided.

Please complete this form and email to [events@firstlutheranbham.org](mailto:events@firstlutheranbham.org) to reserve your table.

Name:

Address:

Phone Number:

Email address:

Number of tables requested: \_\_\_\_ X \$25 = Total due \_\_\_\_

Would you like a receipt? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Confirmation will be sent via email.

Please add [events@firstlutheranbham.org](mailto:events@firstlutheranbham.org) to your contact list to avoid "spam" designation.

### OR

You may print and mail this form along with your \$25 check made payable to First Lutheran Church. Please indicate "Spring Yard Sale" on the memo line.

Mailing address:

First Lutheran Church, 2507 Highland Ave. South, Birmingham, AL 35205

Please note, in the event of rain, an alternate date will be announced.

You may opt to donate any remaining items to charity and we will make arrangements for a pick up for Saturday afternoon. Yes \_\_\_ **I want to donate unsold items.**

## Coming Attractions for 2024

### Family Game Night is Back!

We are kicking off this event with a grand ole fashioned BINGO game! Please save the date Wednesday, July 17<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm. This fun night is open for members and neighbors of all ages.



We need your help to make this happen - any small prizes that you want to donate will be appreciated. Watch the newsletter and our website for more details.

Contact June Weir at [junerweir@gmail.com](mailto:junerweir@gmail.com)

### More Fun at Movie Night on the Lawn

As summertime is winding down and school is starting up again—let's enjoy one more fun event! Join our movie night on Saturday, August 10<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm on the front lawn weather permitting or the Fellowship Hall if weather doesn't cooperate.

Please let us know what movie(s) you want to see, keeping in mind this event is open to the neighborhood and will entertain all ages.

If you have a DVD player or projector that we may use for the event, please let June Weir know. **Send your recommendations for family-friendly movies to [junerweir@gmail.com](mailto:junerweir@gmail.com)**

## Happy Ordination Anniversary!

Congratulations to Pastor George Murdaugh who will celebrate 40 years in pastoral ministry on April 28! We're thankful for his service to our congregation and pray God continues to bless him.



**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

**DIGITAL MEDIA**  
June Weir

**FIRST IMPRESSIONS EDITOR**  
Heather Lackey

**Birthdays & Anniversaries**



- 4/13: Tom Lackey
- 4/15: Sunni Sharit
- 4/28: Grayson Crenshaw
- 4/29: Rosie Walton

**No April Anniversaries  
on Record**

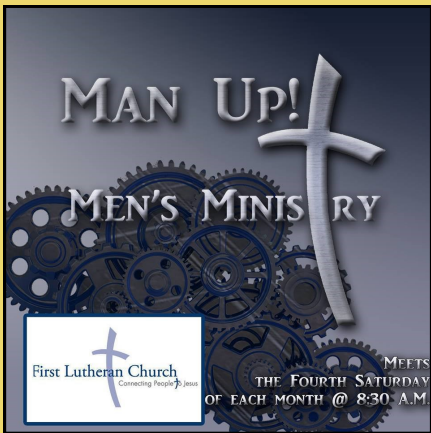
**Worship Team...April 2024**

**April 7**  
 Pastor: George Murdaugh  
 Worship Asst: Charles Craig  
 Reader: Frances Robinson  
 Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris &  
 James McGraw  
 Music: Larry Donaldson

**April 21**  
 Pastor: Tom Lackey  
 Worship Asst: Glen Thompson  
 Reader: Eva Hill  
 Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris &  
 James McGraw  
 Music: Becky Schultz

**April 14**  
 Pastor: Tom Noon  
 Worship Asst: Henry Mosely  
 Reader: Wendy Harris  
 Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris &  
 James McGraw  
 Music: Larry Donaldson

**April 28**  
 Pastor: Tony Ramsey  
 Worship Asst: Mike Halbrooks  
 Reader: Judy Drews  
 Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris &  
 James McGraw  
 Music: Larry Donaldson



**ManUP! Our men's  
 ministry is back in action!  
 We're resuming this  
 group Saturday, April 27.  
 See pg. 5 of this issue for  
 more information.**

