

# FIRST Impressions

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A Publication of First Lutheran Church · Birmingham, AL

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### First Lutheran Church

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

[View our Church Calendar](#)



## Pastor's Pen

### Choosing What is Better

*"But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made."*  
- Luke 10:40a NIV

Luke tells us that Martha had opened her home to Jesus and his disciples. Custom required that she welcome them properly, and this was no small undertaking. Martha was busy seeing that all the details of meals and lodging were suitably observed. When she had invited Jesus, she most likely was counting on her sister, Mary, to help make his visit a success. However, Mary

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## 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)

**7/4:** Thunder on the Mountain, Vulcan Park and Museum; [www.visitvulcan.com](http://www.visitvulcan.com)

**7/4:** Independence Day Celebration, American Village in Montevallo; [www.americanvillage.org](http://www.americanvillage.org)

**7/4-18 (Thursdays Only):** Summer Movie Night, Avondale Brewing Company; [www.avondalebrewing.com](http://www.avondalebrewing.com)

**7/5-10:** 2024 Transplant Games of America, BJCC; [www.transplantgamesofamerica.org](http://www.transplantgamesofamerica.org)

**7/19 - 8/11:** *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*, Red Mountain Theatre; [www.redmountaintheatre.org](http://www.redmountaintheatre.org)

**7/26:** Hootie & the Blowfish, Oak Mountain Amphitheater; [www.theoakmountainamphitheater.com](http://www.theoakmountainamphitheater.com)



*(cont'd from p. 1)*

made a different choice. From the moment that Jesus arrived, she had focused her attention on him. Seated there at his feet, she listened intently to all that he had to say.

Martha was piqued. When she discovered Mary sitting “idly” at Jesus’ feet, she was no longer able to contain her anger. She admonished Jesus, saying, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” Her outburst betrayed her. She wasn’t the gracious hostess she sought to be. She not only accused her sister of laziness, but at the same time she accused her guest of being uncaring. She demanded that he remedy the household situation!

Martha’s distraction, I believe, came partly from her personal list of musts and shoulds. We all have such a list. They include the way that we feel particular tasks must or should be done. They are the best ways of doing things, our way, a way that grants our personal stamp of approval and helps us feel good about ourselves. We invest much personal energy in our way of doing things, the personal energy that Jesus encountered in Martha’s outburst. While the standards of Jewish hospitality could have been met adequately by her household servants and friends, Martha’s personal list became her distraction. She needed to oversee things personally to make sure they were done properly. Martha had lost her focus on spiritual things. Jesus was at Bethany. By fulfilling her own agenda, she was about to miss being with him.

Jesus didn’t go to Bethany to approve Martha’s hospitality. He doesn’t come to judge our way of doing things, either. On the contrary, he comes to free us from the personal anxieties and habits that rule our lives, separate us from others, and distract us from our relationship with him. Do you know what is on your list? Ask him to show you. Once he shows you, ask for his help to choose what is better.

*Prayer: Lord, give me eyes to see the things on my agenda that separate me from others and from you. Give me grace to give them to you, and to find your peace. Amen.*

In His Peace,  
Pastor Schultz

## From the President

God has answered our prayers and provided a new pastor for First Lutheran Church. Pastor Thomas Presley has accepted our call and will be moving to Birmingham in the middle of July. On June 13 and 14 the congregation hosted Pastor Presley and his wife Tori. During the two-day visit, Pastor Presley and Tori met with the Call Committee, the Church Council, the deacons, and the media/technology group of the church. Each of these groups shared different information about the ministry of First Lutheran Church and answered questions that the Presley's had. The meetings were scheduled during the evenings so that Pastor Presley and Tori could have time to get familiar with Birmingham and the surrounding areas during the day. They used the time to look at housing opportunities, schools, and amenities available in the area.

Time was also set aside for Pastor Presley to meet with the pastors currently serving the congregation and to meet with Pastor Tom Noon, the Circuit Visitor.

On Friday evening, they spent time with the congregation at large at a meet-and-greet event. They were overwhelmed with the freshly prepared desserts and hors d'oeuvres our members prepared, and they had a great time meeting and getting to know everyone. They were very appreciative of the turnout to meet them.

Pastor Presley pledged to give us an answer within a couple of weeks of the visit. We were praying for the Holy Spirit to move him to accept the call and if he did accept, we expected them to move quickly since Tori is due to deliver their third child the first week of August.

I want to thank everyone who participated in either preparing the church for the visit or participated in the planned meetings or the meet-and-greet event. We put our best foot forward and made a great impression on the Presley's. We thank God that he has chosen Pastor Presley to be our shepherd. As plans develop to welcome the Presley's to our congregation, church leadership will share information through announcements and emails.

In Christ'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 ✠



*Whoever*  
SOWS GENEROUSLY  
WILL ALSO REAP  
*Generously*

2 CORINTHIANS 9:6

*joy of the  
Lord*



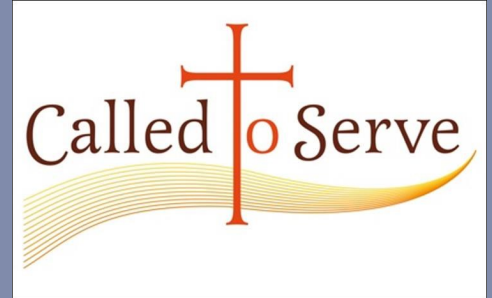
## Called to Serve and Celebrate Ministry

There is one fact that every gardener knows, and it is the “Law of the Harvest.” In order to enjoy the harvest of fruits and vegetables at the end of a growing season you must first have planted the seeds in the spring. If you do not plant, you will not have a harvest. And you cannot plant the seeds one day and expect a harvest next week! The seeds need water, fertilizer, sunshine, and time to grow. So, the gardener who is hoping for a harvest must first pay attention to the basics and take time to plant a garden. In your personal life of service in God’s Garden here on earth, what type of harvest are you planning for? If you are expecting to reap the rewards of a fulfilling life, what “seeds” of service are you offering to God today? God has blessed us all with unique talents that he expects us to be using now when we have time to plant. Or are you waiting for just the right time ... delaying planting for “the right conditions?” Only God knows when we will be called to account for our actions and the use of his resources of time, talent, and treasure. The fruits of our labor in service to the church are pleasing to God. We cannot hope to gain heaven by our works, but our actions here on earth reflect our faith and the hope for a heavenly Spiritual Benefits of Giving.

Scripture tells us God owns all things and places material things in our possession. God entrusts what is his to our care to use in his service. It follows then that we are not the owners, but managers of God’s property.

Lorenza Robinson

Called to Serve & Celebrate Ministry



## Man Up! Men’s Ministry

**Saturday, July 27**

The July Man Up! gathering will take place **Saturday, July 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 work project. A sign-up sheet will be posted on one of the bulletin boards. Please sign up by July 21 so we’ll know how many to plan for breakfast. Contact Glen Thompson with any questions.



## Deacons' Corner To Serve One Another

*"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace."*

*- 1 Peter 4:10*

We have selected the following men of First Lutheran Church to serve as our deacons for the 2024-2026 term: Michael Halbrooks, Shane Harris, Anthony McGraw, Henry Mosley, Robert Regulus, Lorenza Robinson, Nelson Sharit, Andy Sullivan, Glen Thompson, Stan Weir, and Charles Craig.

It is our desire to serve you as the Lord enables us with the various gifts (talents) that our Lord has given each of us. We want to be an encouragement to motivate you and each other in the faith. We are looking forward to introducing ourselves to each member of the congregation so that you can learn who your individual deacon is and in turn be better served.

Through prayer to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we ask for His continued guidance to be our light through the many tribulations of our world today.

In His Service,  
Charles Craig  
Chairman, Board of Deacons

## 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).



# WORSHIP

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

## LWML News

### Painting the Planet Purple with Servanthood

*1942-2024 -- 82 YEARS of GOD*



### What does the BIBLE say about Freedom?

The Bible addresses the concept of freedom in many ways, encompassing both spiritual and physical aspects. It highlights the theme of liberation, liberty, and the deliverance of people from bondage throughout its narrative. Here are some key points regarding freedom as found in the Bible:

- 1. Freedom from Sin:** Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross provides freedom from the bondage of sin. It teaches that through faith in Christ, believers are justified and forgiven, setting them free from guilt and consequences of their transgressions.
- 2. Freedom of Choice:** God grants humans the freedom to make choices, both morally and spiritually. The Bible shows this through stories of individuals exercising their free will, though it also highlights the importance of making righteous choices according to God's will.
- 3. Freedom through Truth:** In the Gospel of John, Jesus said, 'You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free' (John 8:32). The Bible emphasizes the significance of knowing and following God's truth to experience genuine freedom in life.
- 4. Freedom in Love:** Galatians 5:13 says, "For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." The Bible teaches that freedom should not lead to self-centeredness, but should be expressed through loving and serving others.
- 5. Freedom from Fear:** The Bible encourages believers not to be bound by fear but trust in God's protection and guidance. Psalm 91:4 says, "He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings, you will find refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and buckler."
- 6. Freedom to Live in Christ:** In Romans 6:18, the Apostle Paul writes, "having been set free from sin, [you] have become slaves of righteousness." The Bible portrays that true freedom is found in being united with Christ and living in obedience to Him.

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**7. Freedom in the Spirit:** Galatians 5:1 declares, “For freedom, Christ has set us free; stand firm, therefore, and do not, submit again to a yoke of slavery.” The Bible teaches that believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who empowers them to live victoriously and resist the bondage of sin.

The Bible conveys a profound message of freedom, encompassing spiritual redemption from sin, the liberty to choose, living in truth and love, freedom from fear, and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. It underscores that true freedom is not merely the absence of restrictions but a state of being in harmony with God and living according to His divine principles.

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

Sheree McGraw, President  
First Lutheran LWML

Source: <https://scripturesavvy.com/bible-verses-about-freedom/>

## Coming Attractions

### Movie Night on the Lawn

Join our movie night on Saturday, August 10 at 6 pm on the front lawn, weather permitting.

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)**

### Family Game Night is Back!

Let's play BINGO! Please save the date Tuesday, September 10 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 would be appreciated. Watch the newsletter and our website for more details.





## 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



7/4: Beverly Halbrooks  
7/5: Josephine Stallworth  
7/11: Dan Phiher  
7/26: George Murdaugh  
7/28: E.J. Robinson



7/17: Nelson & Marcy Sharit

## Worship Team...July 2024

### July 7

Pastor: Kurtis Schultz  
Worship Asst: Mike Halbrooks  
Reader: Robert Regulus  
Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris & James McGraw  
Music: Larry Donaldson

### July 21

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

### July 14

Pastor: George Murdaugh  
Worship Asst: Anthony McGraw  
Reader: Frances Robinson  
Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris & James McGraw  
Music: Larry Donaldson

### July 28

Pastor: Tony Ramsey  
Worship Asst: Charles Craig  
Reader: Eva Hill  
Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris & James McGraw  
Music: Larry Donaldson



**ManUP! Our men's ministry is back in action!**  
**The group meets on the last Saturday of the month at 8:30 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall.**

