

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 Movie Night Recap
- 4 Evening Prayer
- 5 Stewardship
- 6 LWML News
- 7 Joy of the Lord
- 7 Bible Study Opportunities
- 7 Man Up! January Info
- 8 Birthdays & Anniversaries
- 8 January Worship Team

Pastor's Pen I Confess to You, O Lord

After the Invocation, after we call upon the Lord to be in the midst of us, we immediately move to Confession and Absolution. Which, of course, makes sense. If we call the Lord to be with us, we must then ask for His forgiveness so that we stand in His holy presence with joy and not trembling. However, most people don't enjoy doing this. I don't say this as an insult but more of a fact. The act of confessing something that you did wrong is widely regarded as difficult. I don't have to tell you that. You know this to be true. Look at how we act toward one another in regard to saying sorry. Generally, we have to work up the courage to say that we are sorry and more *Continued on page 2*



First Lutheran Church
2507 Highland Avenue
Birmingham, AL 35205
205.933.0380
www.firstlutheranbham.org

[View our Church Calendar](#)



Local Events

Through 1/15 (Wed.- Sun. only): Glow Wild, Birmingham Zoo; www.birminghamzoo.com

Through 3/29: Birmingham Squadron Basketball, BJCC Legacy Arena; www.birmingham.gleague.nba.com

1/9: State Ballet Theatre of Ukraine presents *Sleeping Beauty*, Alabama Theatre; www.alabamatheatre.com

1/10-11: *Beethoven + Struass*, Alys Stephens Center; www.alabamasymphony.org

1/14-19: *Annie*, BJCC Concert Hall; www.americantheatreguild.com/birmingham

1/18: Martin Lawrence, BJCC Legacy Arena ; www.birmingham-theater.com

1/24-25: *Star Wars: A New Hope* in concert, BJCC Concert Hall; www.alabamasymphony.org

1/31- 2/2: Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, BJCC Legacy Arena; www.ringling.com



(cont'd from p. 1)

often than not we just say, “I am sorry.” The response being, “It’s ok,” or “It’s fine.” But is that really the proper way to do these things? Think about how much more impactful, meaningful, and genuine an apology (confession) sounds when you actually name the thing that you do wrong. Instead of the “I’m sorry” that just assumes we all know what is going on the Lord teaches us to be specific. “I’m sorry that I sinned against you in this way by doing or saying this thing.”

The response to such a confession is also important. In the pre-marital counseling sessions I’ve been blessed to do, I have often reminded couples that the right response to a confession is to say, “I forgive you.” The Lord doesn’t teach us that we are tell people that their sins against us or sins against others is “ok” or “fine” or that we “shouldn’t worry about it.” Instead, we say “I forgive you” as if to say “I know that you have wronged me and I will not hold this against you. Christ has covered this sin as well as my sins. I love you.” If this is the way the Lord has taught us to confess to one another, how much more so should we also confess to God in such a way. That is why there is more than a moment of silence before we recite our corporate confession together on Sunday mornings. It is not silence for silence’s sake. Instead, we take that time to actually confess before God the sins that burden us. More importantly we hear His comforting words of the Absolution. The Lord comes to us willingly and joyfully full of grace and mercy for His people. So next time we confess together, remember how much God loves you. His responses are not flippant but full of wonder and love. God says, “I forgive you and I love you.”

In Christ,

Pastor Tommy

Need to reach Pastor Tommy?



Email t.presley@firstlutheranbham.org or call the church at 205.933.0380 and when prompted to “select from the following menu,” press 5. This will connect you directly to him at any time.

From Our Congregational President

What resolutions did you make for the new year? In December 2024, as I thought about New Year resolutions for the church in 2025, I thought it would be good to finally put the effects of Covid-19 behind us and I think we may actually be able to do that. In fact, I think in some ways we have actually exceeded where we were prior to the Covid shutdowns. During Covid, Pastor Lampella retired but God graced us with five dedicated retired pastors to serve our congregation. In addition, we were blessed with the talents of one pastor who had intimate knowledge of the call process, which we used extensively until God chose Pastor Presley to be our new full-time shepherd. During this time Stan and June Weir started a dual track improvement and retention program. Stan started planning facility improvements so the congregation could meet for worship again and June started an online ministry to keep the congregation connected and in worship. June was able to assemble a talented team which not only coordinated the broadcast of the weekly services but also rebuilt the whole worship experience and created an online presence for the church through social media and a revamped website. In addition, the church began offering online Bible studies lead by Pastor Murdaugh on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 PM and Saturday mornings at 9:00AM. Pastor Murdaugh also led a Sunday morning in person study for a couple of years until Pastor Presley took over the class in August 2024. A men's Bible study – Man Up- restarted in March 2024. It currently meets on the last Saturday of each month at 8:30 AM. The Women's Tuesday Bible Study is restarting on January 14, 2025, and meeting thereafter on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at noon at the church. With this class restarting, the church will at last have all its pre-Covid Bible studies back up and running. I encourage all women to attend this Bible study. The Bible study will be focused on topics that are of interest to the group.

I think the church is well positioned to reach out to the community and expand God's kingdom. We will continue to work through our online presence and will seek to gain access into the UAB system to both students and employees. We are looking forward to offering events that are attractive to the neighborhood in order to engage them. Movie nights, game nights, and/or craft events may be utilized. Please plan to participate in them as they are held.

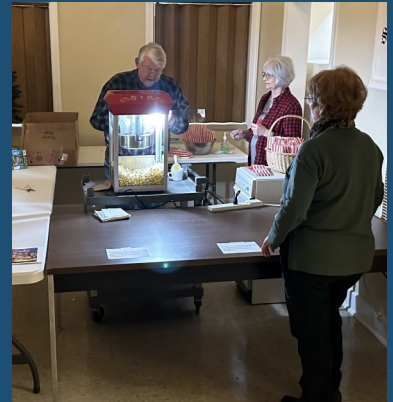
I want to thank Pastor Presley for working with the Church Council to find an acceptable alternative to Concordia Health Plans for his family's health insurance for 2025. By utilizing the federal government's healthcare exchange instead of Concordia Plans, the church is able to save approximately \$26,000 in health insurance costs.

In Christ's service,
Glen Thompson
Congregational President

THE STAR Shines Brightly!

Members of First Lutheran took a bold step with a new event held on the first day of Advent—a movie, THE STAR was offered to the Birmingham community. While this was free to those attending, we asked for donations to help the storm survivors in Western North Carolina, South Carolina and Florida. Donations of non-perishable food items and money were collected. Thrivent supported the event and provided \$250 to our Thrivent Team. This covered the cost of renting a professional screen and projector. With your support, we raised over \$900, and the best news is Thrivent will match the funds donated to the storm survivors.

Special thanks to the many hands that helped with the event, including Larry Donaldson, Shane and Wendy Harris, Heather Lackey, Carol Lackey, Mike Halbrooks, Ginger Reeves, Francis and Lorenza Robinson, Lynn and Dan Phifer, Jack VanOrman, Stan Weir, Pastor Kurtis Schultz (he is a great at running a popcorn machine), and A G Lighting & Events. You are AWESOME!



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

Evening Prayer

✠ ENTER IN SILENCE ✠

✠ WORSHIP PRAYERFULLY ✠

✠ DEPART IN PEACE ✠



Stewardship

When we come to church on Sunday morning, we drag in our bag of sins. After the first hymn the Pastor invites us to confess our sins.

Pastor tells us after our confession: ***“Your sins are forgiven.”*** These are the beautiful words he repeats after we have received Holy Communion. What a powerful phrase to let us know we have deliverance from sin! I think this is a miraculous way for us to think about 2025. We begin the new year through faith in our Lord. We know our sins are forgiven. Praise God!

Jesus shed His blood for all. We are reminded in 1 Timothy 2:4 ***“God our Savior wants everyone to be saved and to come to know the truth.”***

Almost all of us have made New Year resolutions to begin on January 1; they usually don't last long! They often have to do with weight control and being on a diet. By February 14th, if not before, we are enjoying our Valentine chocolates.

What if our new year resolution is more spiritual than edible? What if we promise to read the Bible daily, actually ***read*** the Portals of Prayer devotionals and be more diligent in praying and attending worship regularly? Wouldn't our witness be better?

Let's pray that our “2025 New Beginnings” will be pleasing to God. Let's pray that we can continue with our stewardship gifts of time, talents, and treasures in a manner that shows God's love for all.

We all are given the same amount of time each day. Let us use it wisely. We all have been given a variety of talents. Let's use them in a God pleasing way. We may discover a talent we didn't know we possess. Maybe we have been afraid of using that talent. Let's use them wisely. Let's reassess our finances in the new year. Let's remember all gifts belong to God. We can begin tithing or even increase our financial support of His church. As Pastor said in a sermon recently, “Chew on that for a while!”

Blessings in 2025,

Lynn M. Phifer
Council Member at Large

LWML News New Year: New Beginning



At the beginning of every new year many of us make resolutions, increasing our prayer time, Bible study, and church attendance. Maybe it's the infamous "eat less, exercise more" to lose weight.

How many of those do we complete or continue past the first two months? Perhaps, had those plans or resolutions been committed to Lord, might they have succeeded? *"Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart; Trust in Him and he will do this."* - Psalm 37:4-5.

The Lutheran Women in Mission here at First have designated our major mission projects to three specific agencies. These will be funded through Mite offerings, donations, or other fund-raising efforts to be determined.

- Local Mission Project -- Grace House Ministries
- National Mission Project --- St. Jude Children's Research Hospital
- International Mission Project --- Lutheran World Relief (support where needed in Africa)

These projects constitute part of our efforts in spreading the Gospel and will require our time, talents, and offerings. And yes, we have committed these projects to the Lord. As such, we seek the continuous support and prayers from each of you as we pursue these efforts.

We give thanks and praise to God for His mercy.

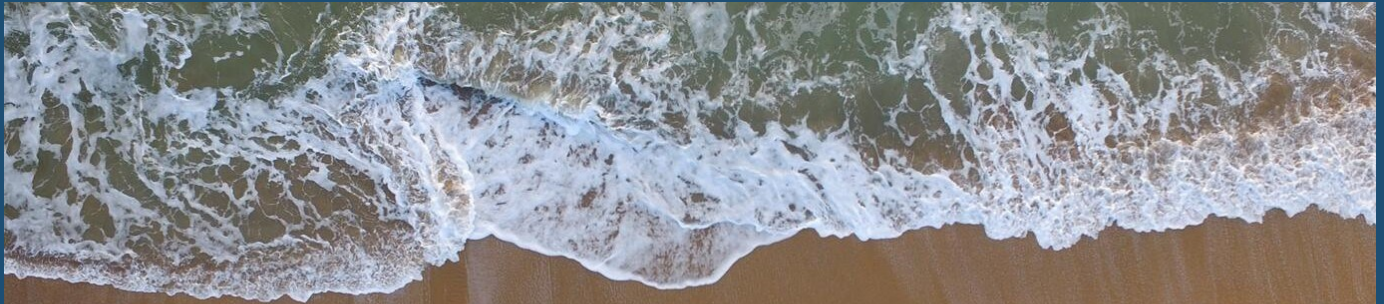
Frances Burks Foy
President, First Lutheran LWML

2 Peter 3:18 - Growing in God's Grace

WORSHIP

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

Joy of the Lord



If we confess our sins,
he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,
and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

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.



Man Up! Men's Ministry

The January Man Up! gathering will take place **Saturday, January 25 at 8:30 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 January 19 so we'll know how many to plan on for breakfast.

Contact Glen Thompson with any questions.





FIRST LUTHERAN STAFF

PASTOR

Rev. Tommy Presley

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



- 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 on Record

Worship Team...January 2025

January 5

Pastor: Tommy Presley
 Worship Asst: Charles Craig
 Reader: Heather Lackey
 Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris & James McGraw
 Music: Larry Donaldson

January 19

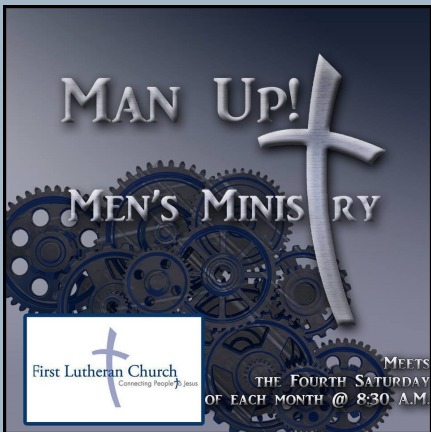
Pastor: Tommy Presley
 Worship Asst: Glen Thompson
 Reader: Robert Regulus
 Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris & James McGraw
 Music: Becky Schultz

January 12

Pastor: Tommy Presley
 Worship Asst: Henry Mosley
 Reader: Mike Halbrooks
 Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris & James McGraw
 Music: Larry Donaldson

January 26

Pastor: Tommy Presley
 Worship Asst: Mike Halbrooks
 Reader: Frances Robinson
 Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris & James McGraw
 Music: Larry Donaldson



Our men's ministry, Man UP!, meets the last Saturday of the month at 8:30 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall.

All men are welcome!

