

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 Message
- 6 LWML News
- 7 Mite Box Challenge
- 7 Bible Study Opportunities
- 8 Joy of the Lord
- 8 "Just Desserts" Auction
- 8 Man Up! November Information
- 9 Voters' Meeting
- 9 Evening Prayer
- 10 Stewardship
- 11 Birthdays & Anniversaries
- 11 Worship Team



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[View our Church Calendar](#)



Pastor's Pen A Blessed Eternity

Amid all the trials and tribulations of our world it can be easy for the Christian to forget the great gift of eternal life given to them by Christ. We as Christians may talk about it, preach about it, and it even study it often enough but the hustle and bustle of the day to day distracts us from this message. Eternity seems so far away compared to the next daily task we have on our calendars. We reside in the "now" and the "now" demands our attention.

However, sooner or later, our attention is forced to confront eternity. When death comes in all its terror, the Christian is face to face *Continued on page 2*

Local Events

Through 11/30: *Silver & Ceremony from Southern Asia, 1830-1930*, Birmingham Museum of Art; www.artsmbma.org

Saturdays through 12/13: The Market at Pepper Place; www.pepperplacemarket.com

11/1-2: *Six: The Musical, Teen Edition*, Red Mountain Theatre; www.redmountaintheatre.org

11/7: MANIA: The ABBA Tribute, Lyric Theatre; www.lyricbham.com

11/11: 78th National Veterans Day Parade, Downtown Birmingham; www.nationalveteransday.org

11/19: *Whose Live Anyway?* Improv show by cast of *Whose Line is it Anyway?*, Alabama Theatre; www.alabamatheatre.com

11/21-22: *A Night of Winter Dreaming* presented by ASO, Alys Stephens Center; www.alabamasymphony.org



(cont'd from p. 1)

with their own mortality. This thought alone is overwhelming to us. Death lies to us. Grief clouds our hearts to see death as a finality. We are tempted to sink into despair and hopelessness. But take heart dear Christian because Christ has overcome the world! Think of the holy festival of All Saints. We remember those who were called into glory and now rest from their labors with Christ. They are not dead, but *alive*. They live now with Christ. Just as *we* will live with Christ. This is where the Christian's vision should be oriented. Always looking to the eternity that we will share with our Lord and Savior. For in doing this, this world's struggles and toils become bearable in so far as we know there will be end to all this suffering. Christ's kingdom, the one filled with all the saints we love, has no end.

Now, I am not saying that we ignore the present. There are plenty of worthy things to care about in our lives. Whether that is in your personal life, the life of your neighbor, or the life of our nation and the world, it is necessary that we care about the present. We struggle, persevere, and pray through the trials of this life knowing that it is pleasing to the Lord that we work in our vocations. However, at the same time, we understand that whatever happens in this life is not as final as it seems. Our home is elsewhere. It is in the eternal, heavenly realms of the Father where there will be no pain or suffering and God Himself will wipe away every tear from our eyes. We may not always feel like we have a blessed life. But we will most assuredly have a blessed eternity.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Tommy



Fall Back!

Daylight Saving Time ends
Sunday, November 2 at 2:00 a.m.

Remember to set your clocks **BACK** one
hour before bedtime the
night before.

From the President

On October 4, nineteen members of the congregation gathered to discuss the long-range plans of the church. The day began with a scriptural direction from Matthew 25:31-40. Pastor Presley discussed the characteristics of being Christian and encouraged the group to keep the things that God holds as important – to take care of the widow and the orphan and to feed the poor- to be our focus in the community around us and to let the Lord gather them as he ordains.

The group heard from representatives of groups and officers of the church and they reviewed accomplishments of the past three years and concerns from each group. Below is a summary of their reports.

Media Ministry and Technology accomplishments:

1. Broadcast on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube
2. Web presence through Google Business Site and Yelp
3. Up-to-date church website with calendar of events, newsletters, and church information.
4. Implemented QR code for visitors
5. Produced Reformation reels (shorts)
6. Produced Advent and Lenten devotions
7. Monthly newsletters

Trustees accomplishments:

1. New education wing roof - \$138,322
2. Replaced fellowship hall ceiling -\$65,000
3. Replaced fascia boards - \$7,613
4. Replaced broken plaster throughout the building
5. Landscaped side flower bed and provided routine lawn maintenance
6. Pressure washed the sidewalks
7. Added security cameras
8. Upgraded electrical system in the sanctuary
9. Converted fluorescent lights to LED lights
10. Replaced broken floor tiles in the sanctuary
11. Repaired plumbing in the men's restroom, the unisex restroom, and the Sacristy - \$3,500
12. Removed dead tree above the parking lot - \$4,300

Treasurer's Report:

In December 2024, the congregation approved a 2025 budget of \$231,620.42 or \$4,825.43 per week. Through September 14, 2025 offerings of \$122,924.25 or \$3,322.28 had been received. Thus far for the year, offerings are behind budget by \$55,616.66. The church should try to keep three to six months operating expenses in reserves at all times. This means that we should keep between \$57,905 and \$115,810 in the general fund at all times. Our current balance in the general fund is \$71,903.93. In addition to these funds, we have \$7,899.60 in designated funds, \$54,000 in Pastor Support Reserve Fund, and \$21,000 in the Organ Fund.

Our income and expenditures are currently balanced but any additional capital expenditures or increased routine expenses will require additional funding.

(cont'd on p. 4)

(Cont'd from p. 3)

Fellowship accomplishments:

1. Fat Tuesday pancake breakfast – February 2023.
2. Fifth Sunday potluck dinners
3. Midweek Advent and Lenten dinners
4. Pastoral candidate Meet and Greet events

Deacon accomplishments:

1. Pastors Schultz, Murdaugh, Noon, Lackey, and Ramsey provided pastoral care during the vacancy
2. Constituted a Call Committee and called Pastor Presley
3. Ensures that worship services are done in good order; participates as worship assistants & ushers
4. Addressing absentee membership

LWML accomplishments:

1. LWML Sunday each year
2. Mite challenge between men and women
3. Supporting missions – St. Jude Hospital, Grace House Ministries, Lutheran World Relief, Samaritan's Purse, Wells in Africa, Amanda Epperson missionary, Baer Christian Hospital and Clinic in India, Ronald McDonald House, and WorshipAnew.

Church Council accomplishments:

1. Updated all church policies
2. Re-established greeters on Sunday morning
3. Established a \$50,000 Pastor Reserve Fund to protect the ministry
4. Established an endowment fund through Legacy Deo
5. Endorsed stewardship emphasis
6. Revised guidelines for wedding ceremonies

Greater Church accomplishments:

1. Sent volunteers to assist victims of the Selma tornado in 2023
2. Neighborhood Christmas caroling each year
3. Neighborhood yard sale in 2023
4. Created Welcome Bags for visitors
5. Women's Bible study restarted in January 2025
6. Man Up restarted in April 2024
7. Youth Sunday school restarted
8. Easter Vigil

The group then spent time defining the congregation's strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities. They were defined as follows:

Strengths:

1. Dedicated membership
2. Media ministry team
3. Active retired ministers
4. Location
5. Welcoming to visitors
6. Diverse membership
7. Bible based ministry
8. Liturgy and Bible based worship with wonderful hymns
9. Fellowship and people look out for each other

(cont'd on p. 5)

(Cont'd from p. 4)

Weaknesses:

1. Struggle to relate to and engage with the neighborhood around us
2. Aging leadership
3. Current constitution
4. Not identifying the needs of the community
5. Viewed by nonmembers as boring

Threats:

1. Aging congregation
2. Age of the building and maintenance requirements. Currently needs 2 HVAC units costing a total of \$38,000.
3. Potentially increasing health insurance costs of \$13,300 to \$15,900 per year.
4. Being complacent. Need to share activities and train people; need time and talents inventory.

Opportunities:

1. Neighborhood
2. UAB
3. Highland Park Neighborhood Association
4. Redmont Park neighborhood
5. The fields are plentiful
6. Retiree base in the congregation
7. Have a facility that could be used for community functions

The group then discussed goals for the next five years. These include the following and the person leading the goal:

1. UAB ministry – Pastor Presley
2. Establish a pocket pantry – Judy Drews
3. Local outreach to Norwood Elementary School (Anthony McGraw) and Lovelady Ministries (Monica Foy and LWML may take this project on)
4. Start a Hispanic broadcast of the services – June Weir and Pastor Murdaugh

These goals would be monitored outside the business of the Church Council and will be followed up quarterly.

In His Service,

Glen Thompson, Congregational President

LWML News

Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. - 1 John 4:8

Greetings Brother's and Sister's in Christ,



We had a beautiful celebration for LWML Sunday. We were graced with a video presentation from Amanda Epperson who has been reassigned by **"One Collective"** to South Africa instead of Zambia. Following that, Pastor Murdaugh spoke with us regarding the mission project, **Baer Christian Hospital, India**. We then had brief presentations for **"Worship Anew"** and **Ronald McDonald House, Birmingham**. These four represent our international, National and local charities.

Our official kick-off of the mite box challenge between the Men and Women of the congregation began. Who will win? January will tell the tale.

The women of the congregation were given gift bags which included prayer bracelets with an explanation of the significance of each bead. Thanks to our sister, Eva Hill, for suggesting this project. A heartfelt thanks to all who joined in and celebrated this day with us.

As of this publication, the Lutheran Women in Mission here at First will have participated in our zone's Fall Rally via zoom. The Zone Two, **"Women of Vision"** selected **Hospice of West Alabama** as this year's recipient of **"Gift's From the Heart."** This will be in the form of gift cards from selected stores (Aldi, Publix, Walmart and Winn Dixie).

Our other project is the auction of baked goods scheduled for Sunday November 23, 2025. A sign-up sheet has been placed on a bulletin board near the fellowship hall. This will be our final fundraiser of the year. Again, thanks to everyone for your continued support and prayers. All of our endeavors are to spread the love of God and the good news of the Gospel.

Yours in Christ,

Frances Burks Foy

President, First Lutheran Women in Mission

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

LWML Mite Box Challenge

Who: Men v. Women

When: October 5 - January 4

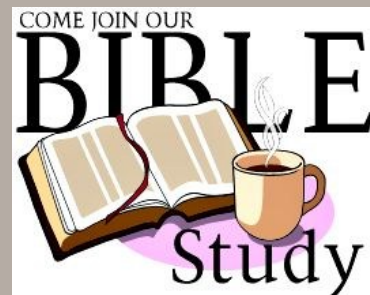
What: Fill up the LWML Mite Boxes that will be distributed on LWML Sunday (October 5) with small change and return them to church by January 4.

It's time to dig between your couch cushions, scour your car's console or glove box, turn your pockets inside-out and then ask yourselves,

"Who will be crowned the mite-y-est?"

Bible Study Opportunities

- Sunday Mornings (in person at First Lutheran) - 9:00 a.m.
- 2nd & 4th Tuesdays - Ladies Bible Study (in person at First Lutheran) - 11:00 a.m.
- Wednesday Evenings - Adult Catechesis and Potluck Dinner (in person at First Lutheran) - Dinner at 5:30 p.m.; Class at 6:00 p.m.
- Wednesday Evenings (via Zoom) - 6:30 p.m.
- Saturday Mornings (via Zoom) - 8:00 a.m.— **NOTE EARLIER TIME**



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.

*Joy of
the Lord*

PRAY
— *On It* —
PRAY
— *Over It* —
PRAY
Through It

**LWML Fundraiser:
“Just Desserts” Baked Goods Auction
November 23 - Following Worship Service**

Join us for a baked goods auction to help raise money for the LWML’s mission projects. Auction items are still needed, so please consider contributing. A signup sheet is posted on the bulletin board across from the church office. Savory breads are welcome too, as are gluten-free and diabetic-friendly treats!



Man Up! Men’s Ministry

Man Up! is on a break for the remainder of 2025. We’ll resume on the **LAST Saturday of January (January 31) at 8:30 a.m.** Stay tuned for any changes in this schedule.





Voters' Meeting

**Sunday, November 2
Immediately Following Worship**

During this meeting, we will discuss the cost of maintenance projects and changes in the healthcare insurance costs for the church. The church council will ask the voters to approve a fundraising campaign to cover these expenses.

Please plan to attend, listen to the church's needs, participate in the discussion and decide how you can help.

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

Evening Prayer

✝ ENTER IN SILENCE ✝

✝ WORSHIP PRAYERFULLY ✝

✝ DEPART IN PEACE ✝



Stewardship

While we should express our thankfulness for God's gifts to us every day year-round, November is a time to be especially thankful as we celebrate Thanksgiving.

In the December 2024 *Heart Health Report*, gratitude is highlighted as a way to help our hearts stay healthy. Studies have shown that being thankful helps to lessen inflammation, which is a risk factor in many serious health conditions. Gratitude helps lower our blood pressure and heart rate.

Another study in "Frontiers in Psychology" shows that gratitude keeps our glucose/cholesterol levels in control, and improves sleep quality and quantity. Before falling asleep our anxiety, depression, fear, and stomach issues are reduced.

Gratitude also boosts optimism. How can we cultivate our gratitude? Here are some tips:

- Keep a gratitude journal. Write down a few things that you did, such as calling a friend, taking a walk, or visiting grandchildren.
- Write a letter to a friend and tell them how much they mean to you.
- Complement others and give them praise for their kindness.
- Volunteer in your community. Visit someone who is lonely.
- Bake a cake for someone or offer to run an errand.
- Reflect on positive things. This can be contagious!
- Go to church. There is nothing like going to church and thanking God for our blessings to increase our feelings of gratitude.

We should be grateful all year, as God has blessed us each and every day. The holiday season is the perfect time to start this habit and then continue it all year.

May we always use our gifts of time, talents, and resources to glorify our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Let us be good stewards and thank God for those gifts and resources he has blessed us with and our ability to use them for his glory.

The apostle Paul greeted Timothy with these words of thanksgiving: "I give thanks to God, whom I serve with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did. I thank him as I remember you always in my prayers night and day."
(2 Timothy 1:3)

Sincerely,

Lynn M. Phifer

Council Member at Large



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



11/1: Glen Thompson
11/2: Kurtis Schultz
11/3: Shane Harris
11/10: Heather Lackey
11/12: Larry Donaldson
11/16: Jerry Graham
11/20: Derek Robinson
11/24: Terry Shiflett
11/30: Sarah Lynxwiler



11/4: Robert & Gwen Regulus
11/11: Stan & June Weir
11/26: Mali & Anja Mathru

Worship Team...November 2025

November 2

Pastor: Tommy Presley
Worship Asst: Anthony McGraw
Communion Asst: Stan Weir
Reader: Mike Halbrooks
Greeters: Carol Lackey & Teresa Murdaugh
Live Stream: Shane Harris & James McGraw
Music: Larry Donaldson

November 23

Pastor: Tommy Presley
Worship Asst: Anthony McGraw
Communion Asst: OPEN
Reader: Wendy Harris
Greeters: Kevin Kirwan & Carol Melton
Live Stream: Shane Harris & James McGraw
Music: Becky Schultz

November 9

Pastor: Tommy Presley
Worship Asst: Henry Mosley
Communion Asst: Mike Halbrooks
Reader: Robert Regulus
Greeters: Eva Hill & Priscilla Williams
Live Stream: Shane Harris & James McGraw
Music: Larry Donaldson

November 30

Pastor: Tommy Presley
Worship Asst: Mike Halbrooks
Communion Asst: Henry Mosley
Reader: Eva Hill
Greeters: Judy Drews & Dot Claunch
Live Stream: Shane Harris & James McGraw
Music: Larry Donaldson

November 16

Pastor: Tommy Presley
Worship Asst: Robert Regulus
Communion Asst: Glen Thompson
Reader: Frances Robinson
Greeters: Fran Foy & Beverly Halbrooks
Live Stream: 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!

