

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 New Year, New Me

Perhaps you have heard this phrase before. It is quite popular around New Year's Eve and New Year's Day. A sort of promise made to oneself at the beginning of a new year to be better or at least different in one or more aspects. However, as we all have experienced at one time or another, new year's resolutions sometimes don't take or last very long. Why am I talking about this at the beginning of December? Good question. For the church, Advent marks the beginning of a new church year as we move into the festival half of our worship together. But as you can see, no ball drops to mark this change. No resolutions are made. In fact, few people

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Local Events

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

Through 1/4: Glow Wild, Birmingham Zoo;
www.birminghamzoo.com

Dec. 4-21: Holiday Spectacular 2025, Red Mountain Theatre;
www.redmountaintheatre.org

Dec. 7: Disney's The Muppet Christmas Carol Live with the ASO, BJCC Concert Hall;
www.alabamasymphony.org

Dec. 11-21: To Kill a Mockingbird, Virginia Samford Theatre;
www.virginiasamfordtheatre.org

Dec. 12-22: Holiday Film Series, Alabama Theatre; www.alabamatheatre.com

Dec. 13-14: George Balanchine's *The Nutcracker*®, BJCC Concert Hall;
www.alabamaballet.org

Dec. 19-20: Handel's Messiah with the ASO, Alys Stephens Center;
www.alabamasymphony.org

Dec. 31: New Year's Eve: A Viennese Celebration, Alys Stephens Center;
www.alabamasymphony.org



(cont'd from p. 1)

realize that there is structure to the church year all its own aside from the secular calendar that we all follow.

For the church, the change in our seasons, the change in our worship marks something very different from the new year of the rest of world. It isn't focused on us. Our year is entirely structured around the life of Christ. Take the season of Advent and Christmas and begin to think about their significance. We celebrate that Christ has come to be with His people becoming incarnate to save us from our sins. While at the same time we look to the second coming of Christ in which we He will establish His kingdom for all eternity, righting every wrong and wiping away every tear from our eyes. Every year we begin with this hope remember what God as already done for us and looking to what He will do in the future. Advent takes this hope and grounds us in it. Christmas celebrates the fullness of the incarnation and speaks to us about what that means for all believers. So even before the world celebrates a "new year" we are already grounding ourselves in something far greater than personal improvement.

So dear Christian, this new year, this advent season I ask you meditate on the great way in which Christ made you His own. Reflect on the cosmic events that took place in order for the gift of our salvation to take place. Reflect on that hope given to us.

Your Brother in Christ,

Pastor Tommy



Trim
the
Tree

**Join us Saturday December 6,
beginning at 9:00 a.m., to trim the tree
and decorate the sanctuary for
Christmas. The coffee will be hot and
the holiday tunes will be cranking!**

From the President

Dear Members of First Lutheran Church,

On November 2, 2025, the Voter's Assembly approved the Church Council's recommendation to sponsor a capital improvements fundraiser for the church. The heating and cooling systems (HVAC) that service the offices and adjoining hallway, the kitchen, and the library have died. In addition, the Christ Window and the utility building are in need of repair. All of these projects will cost approximately \$50,000 to complete. Due to Federal changes in refrigerant usage for the heating and cooling units that will be enacted on January 1, 2026, the Church Council felt it was in the church's best interest to replace the HVAC units before January 1, 2026.

Donations for the capital improvement projects can be included in weekly offerings or by special gifts. All funds donated for the capital improvement projects should be designated as such when given.

At the Voter's Meeting it was also discussed that due to the expiration of tax credits for the Affordable Care Act, the health insurance cost for the church would be increasing by \$17,478 next year. Please prayerfully consider increasing your offering to the Lord to help cover this expense. Currently the church is breaking even between offerings and expenses but it will not be able to cover the increased cost of health insurance without additional offerings.

We trust in the Lord to provide.

In God's service,

Glen Thompson
Congregational President

Voter's Meeting

Sunday, December 7

A voters meeting is scheduled for December 7, 2025 in the fellowship hall following the worship service. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss and approve a budget for 2026 fiscal year and to discuss and approve an amendment to the church's constitution.



In November at the called voters meeting an amendment was proposed to expand voting rights in the church council. Final approval of this amendment will be sought at the December voters meeting. The amendment is included in the duties of the President and are highlighted in **RED** below:

1. Duties of Officers

1.1 The President of the Congregation

- 1.1.1 shall be the principal Officer of the Congregation, subject to the direction and control of the Board of Directors.
- 1.1.2 shall preside over the Congregational Assembly (in accordance with the latest revised edition of Roberts Rules of Order).
- 1.1.3 preside over the Board of Directors meetings.
- 1.1.4 shall sign all legal documents with the Secretary, on behalf of the Congregation.
- 1.1.5 shall enforce the Constitution and Bylaws
- 1.1.6 shall perform such additional duties as may be directed by the Congregational Assembly from time to time.

1.1.6.1

The President shall have the authority to appoint additional members to serve with the Board of Directors from time to time when it is in the best interest of the church. Together these appointed members and the Board of Directors shall constitute the Church Council. The appointed members shall have equal rights in the Church Council, but they will not assume any of the duties of the Board of Directors.

Please plan to attend and participate.

Everyone is invited to attend our
Midweek Advent Worship

December 3, 10 & 17

5:15pm Dinner

6:00pm Worship In Person & Online

Christmas Eve Worship

6:00pm Christmas Eve Carols,
Communion and Candlelight



SCAN ME

Stewardship

“It’s That Time of Year Again” is a popular quote when the Christmas holidays are approaching. What do we Christians mean when we say, *“It’s That Time of Year Again.”*?

We are talking about the season of Advent, the coming of the Christ child. We are preparing for the birth of our Messiah, our Savior, Jesus Christ on Christmas day.

I looked up the definition of Advent in the dictionary to make certain I had the right explanation of the word. Somehow, in error, I looked up the word, “Advert.” Advert means “to pay attention to.” It was a mistake on my part, yet, reading what advert means caused me to really think and “pay attention to” what Advent means. Advent comes from the Latin word, “Adventus,” which means “Arrival.” Yes, we are talking about the arrival of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, on Christmas Day. As we prepare for our Lord’s birth, Advent is a season of prayer and, for some Christians, fasting. The season starts four Sundays before Christmas and is a time of preparation as we get ready for the birth of Jesus Christ.

How do we associate stewardship - our time, talents, and treasures - with Advent and Christmas? We spend this busy season cleaning and decorating our homes, shopping for Christmas gifts, and getting ready for family and friends to visit. But it’s also a special time for using our talents. We may sing Christmas carols walking through our neighborhood. We will sing special Christmas hymns in church on Christmas Eve. Our talents show up in decorating and baking - both at home and at church. And as we remember family and friends with special gifts, let us not forget to give generously to our church as part of the Christmas spirit of giving.

With all our *busyness*, let us remember the real *“Reason for the season.”* Let us remember the birth of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

“She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

- Matthew 1:21

Christmas Blessings,

Lynn M. Phiifer

Council Member at Large

LWML News

MATTHEW 15: 1-9

Greetings Brothers and Sisters in Christ,



We are at the end of the calendar year and we have truly been blessed. The Lutheran Women in Mission here at First had a very successful bake sale/auction. Thanks to all that participated via providing goods and purchasing items.

That being said, all of our 2025 mission projects were fully funded. Praise God. The final presentation of gifts to our mission project recipients will be done during our annual Christmas celebration.

Speaking of the luncheon, we plan to have a great time. Our secret prayer sister will be revealed and at that time we will present gifts. Throughout the year we remember our sister in prayer and ask our Lord to provide whatever is needed.

Our mite box challenge is in full swing and will end in January 2026. This will initiate our fundraising for 2026. Our chosen mission projects will be selected at our January meeting. Please be in prayer with us as we make our decisions. The needs are great but we must narrow our selection to three or four. We pray for guidance from our Lord as we move forward.

As always, we seek your support in all of our endeavors. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all

Blessings and Peace,

Frances Burks Foy

President, First Lutheran Women in Mission

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



Join the family of First Lutheran Church for our

Advent Devotionals

Watch on Instagram, YouTube or Face Book as we share devotionals by Jane Wilke:

Our Dear Christ Enters In

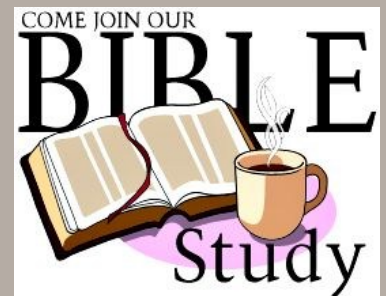
Home means different things to different people. In these devotions, we'll explore what gives home its place of importance, from what we see to what we experience. Walking through the pages will be an exercise in walking through our own homes and realizing the blessing home can be to everyone who finds sanctuary within. Throughout, we will see that what sets a home apart is placing Christ at the center, because true blessing comes to every home where Christ has entered and is centered.



SCAN ME

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



Neighborhood Caroling **Wednesday, December 17** **Immediately Following Mid-Week Service**

If you love singing Christmas carols and spreading holiday cheer, join us as we carol up and down Milner Crescent on December 17. We'll head out immediately following the mid-week Advent service, sharing our joy for the season and our love for Jesus with our neighborhood. This event is always well-received, with one family sometimes "tailgating" on their front lawn in anticipation of our stop at their house!

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 to this schedule.



It's a Mite-y Challenge!

Remember in October when the LWML ladies challenged the men and women of First Lutheran Church to a friendly competition? It's the ladies vs the gentlemen to determine which group can generate the largest amount of coins, cash and/or checks for the LWML mite box drive.

The deadline is coming up soon on January 1, 2026. The winners will be served a fine breakfast by the losers! For those who are counting, currently the ladies have collected \$37.50 in October and another \$170.02 in November—for a total of \$207.02. Gentlemen have collected \$12.52. What's up with that? Are the men waiting for a big finish?

If you are looking for a mite box, these are everywhere - in the Fellowship Hall, in the sanctuary, or just ask a member of the LWML. Please write your name on the box when you turn in your silver and gold. Mite boxes support the missions selected each year by the national LWML organization (and several organizations are in our Southern District). The winners will be announced on Sunday, January 11, 2026.

I'm just saying, I like my eggs over easy!

**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

PASTOR

Rev. Tommy Presley

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Rev. Kurtis Schultz

MINISTRY COORDINATORS:

CHRIST CARE

Rev. Tommy Presley

SERVE & CELEBRATE

Lorenza Robinson

FACILITIES & PROPERTIES

Stan Weir

WORSHIP/DEACONS

Charles Craig

DIGITAL MEDIA

June Weir

FIRST IMPRESSIONS EDITOR

Heather Lackey

Birthdays & Anniversaries



12/3: Carol Lackey

12/8: Haelim Allen

12/13: Kimberly Washington

12/14: Lynn Phifer

12/17: Marcy Sharit

12/25: Wray Allen

12/26: Anja Mathru

12/29: Carol Melton

12/14: Charles & Ernestine Craig

12/20: James & Carol Melton

Worship Team...December 2025

December 7

Pastor: Tommy Presley

Worship Asst: Glen Thompson

Communion Asst: OPEN

Reader: Kevin Kirwin

Greeters: Carol Lackey & Teresa Murdaugh

Live Stream: Shane Harris & James

McGraw

Music: Larry Donaldson

December 24

Pastor: Tommy Presley

Worship Asst: Robert Regulus

Communion Asst: Glen Thompson

Greeters: Carol Lackey

Live Stream: Shane Harris & James

McGraw

Music: Becky Schultz

December 14

Pastor: Tommy Presley

Worship Asst: Anthony McGraw

Communion Asst: Stan Weir

Reader: James McGraw

Greeters: Eva Hill & Priscilla Williams

Live Stream: Shane Harris & James

McGraw

Music: Larry Donaldson

December 28

Pastor: Tommy Presley

Worship Asst: Anthony McGraw

Communion Asst: Stan Weir

Reader: Carol Lackey

Greeters: Kevin Kirwan & Carol Melton

Live Stream: Shane Harris & James

McGraw

Music: Larry Donaldson

December 21

Pastor: Tommy Presley

Worship Asst: Henry Mosley

Communion Asst: Mike Halbrooks

Reader: Sheree McGraw

Greeters: Fran Foy & Beverly Halbrooks

Live Stream: Shane Harris & James

McGraw

Music: Anne Middleton



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!

