

First Congregational Church Information

The Reverend Dr. Dwight D. Andrews, *Senior Minister*

The Reverend Andrew Young, *Pastor of Global Mission*

Minister Myles-Amir Riley,

Minister for Youth and Young Families (myles@firstchurchatl.org)

The Reverend Dr. Angela Dempsey Williams,

Minister for Community Engagement and Congregational Life

(angela.williams040@gmail.com)

The Reverend Harold Eichelberger,

Minister for Digital Strategy and Membership Service

(harold@firstchurchatl.org)

The Reverend Dr. Christopher Ray Alexander, *Minister for Interfaith Engagement*

(fccatlinterfaith@gmail.com)

CHURCH STAFF / MUSIC MINISTRY STAFF

Mr. Donald Sykes, *Church Administrator* (don@firstchurchatl.org)

Ms. Gail Tusan Washington, *Executive Associate* (gailfccatl@gmail.com)

Ms. Denise Curtis, *Finance Administrator* (denise@firstchurchatl.org)

Mr. Travis Brown, *Operations Director* (travis@firstchurchatl.org)

Ms. Joy Scrutchings, *Youth Choir Director and Music Associate*

(joyscrutchings@hokemcnealacademy.com)

Mr. Justin Cornelius and Ms. Velda North, *Music Associates*

Mr. Frank Hoke, *Organist*

SUNDAY WORSHIP AT 11:00 AM

BIBLE STUDY AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION ACTIVITIES

Sunday School meets every 1st & 3rd Sunday at 9:30 am (contact Minister Riley)

College Ministry "The Sunday Reset" meets at 10:00 am (contact Rev. Eichelberger)

Adult Spiritual Study Group I meets Sunday at 9:30 am (contact Mr. James Rodgers)

Monday Night Virtual Bible Study meets at 6:30 pm (contact Ms. Jayne Wallace)

Thursday Night Virtual Spiritual Study Group II

meets at 6:30 pm (contact Mr. James Rodgers)

Telephone: 404-659-6255 • Fax: 404-688-2227

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The Honorable Keisha Lance Bottoms
Guest Speaker

The Reverend Dr. Dwight D. Andrews, *Pastor*
The Reverend Ambassador Andrew Young
Pastor of Global Missions

Sunday, September 27, 2026
11:00 am

105 Courtland Street, NE
Atlanta, Georgia

Who We Are

*Looking for a church home?
Please consider joining First Church!*

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of First Congregational Church of Atlanta (UCC) is to be a Christ-centered church which leads people to God through a commitment to, and the practice of our five key precepts of: worship, prayer, study, service, and stewardship.

VISION STATEMENT

To be a Christ-centered church that models the love of God, builds relationships, and empowers people of all walks of life through our creative services, discipleship, outreach, ministries, and teaching, as well as striving always to use our time, talents, and treasures to the building of the beloved community.

OUR INVITATION

First Church is an inclusive, social justice, and social gospel church. Founded in 1867, it has been a Christian witness to Atlanta and the World for over one hundred and fifty-six years! Its mission is rooted in the Christian concept of love and our efforts for social justice, human rights, equity, and inclusion of all people, and racial reconciliation are hallmarks of our ministry. As a congregational church we believe in the priesthood of all believers. Each of us is called to do our part to make this a better world.

Fall and Winter-at-a-Glance

DATE	EVENT
Friday, October 2	First Friday featuring Mace Hibbard
Sunday, October 4	Servette Sunday and Sisters in the Law fundraiser
Sunday, October 11	Womens’ Fellowship Sunday
Sunday, October 18	Men’s Day with special guest speaker Dr. Willie Underwood, III, President of the American Medical Association. Third Sunday Jazz Worship
Sunday, October 25	“Faith and AI Inforum” following worship service with author, activist, and scholar Dr. Kamau Bobb, discussing his new book, The Bullwhip's Algorithm: Artificial Intelligence and America's Racial Caste System. Co-sponsored by the Social Action Committee.
Sunday, November 1	Fall Quarterly Meeting following worship service
Friday, November 6	First Friday featuring Nnenna Freelon (in the Sanctuary)
Sunday, November 8	Stewardship Sunday
Saturday, November 14	Church Council In-person Potluck Luncheon (12p—2p)
Sunday, November 29	Advent Begins Hanging of the Green Service
Sunday, December 6	Second Sunday of Advent Many Moods of Christmas
Friday/Saturday December 11-12	Holiday Jazz Vespers
Sunday, December 13	Third Sunday of Advent Children’s Christmas Play
Sunday, December 20	Fourth Sunday of Advent Service of Nine Lessons and Carols
Friday, December 25	Christmas Day Service 10AM
Thursday, December 31	Watch Night Service (in-person only)

**ALL First Friday at First “LIVE” events held in the Commons at 7 PM (except Nnenna Freelon).
Doors open at 6 PM.
Tables of 8 : \$200 | General: \$25 | Students: \$10
Special Pricing: \$35 for **Nnenna Freelon (only)**



A Welcome from the Pastor

Welcome to the Annual Homecoming Celebration of First Congregational Church, Atlanta. Homecoming traditionally marks the beginning of our fall programs and provides an opportunity to reconnect with one another. It is a time to reach out to members and friends whom we have not seen in a while and to extend a hearty welcome to new friends who join us today.

Our recent Homecomings have taken place against a backdrop of tremendous upheaval and turmoil in our country and throughout the world. Trust in our leaders and institutions has been shaken, and each day seems to bring new challenges and threats. Technologies such as artificial intelligence, which hold tremendous promise for improving our lives, also raise profound questions about our future and the kind of society we are creating. The erosion of confidence in public education, the weaponization of information, the spread of disinformation, the dismissal of science, and the rise of anti-intellectualism should be a grave concern to all of us.

Against this backdrop, our theme this year is “**Our Home, Your Home, God’s Home.**” It offers a powerful response to those forces that seek to divide us, deceive us, and instill fear. Our theme calls us to practice a radical hospitality—a hospitality that welcomes one another into our homes and recognizes that our homes are ultimately God’s home. All faith communities and houses of worship—churches, temples, mosques, and masjids—are places where God’s presence dwells. Scripture reminds us that in God’s house there are many rooms—rooms with space for all of us.

Our speaker today, an advocate for radical hospitality, is the former Mayor of Atlanta and current gubernatorial candidate, the Honorable Keisha Lance Bottoms. Her decades of public service and her unapologetic witness as a woman of faith make her a fitting person to speak with us today. I am especially grateful that Ms. Bottoms has chosen to be with us on this special day. We pray for her safety and protection and are blessed and honored by her presence.

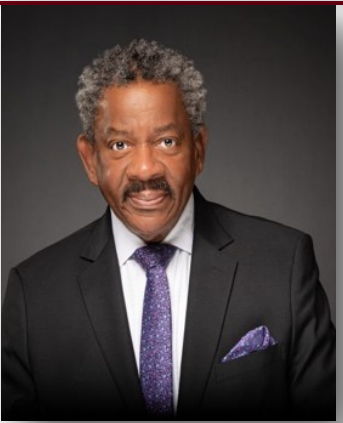
We all understand and appreciate the sanctity and value of home—a place to return to, a place of safety and comfort, a place of familiarity, belonging, and welcome. Yet our celebration of home must also call our attention to the realities that make having a home increasingly difficult for so many. The housing affordability crisis and homelessness in America are making it harder for individuals and families to secure safe and stable housing. Many hardworking Americans are being forced to give up the dream of having a home of their own. Affordability has become a common refrain, but beneath it lies a deeper reality: poverty and the rising cost of simply making a life are creating a new and painful reality for many.

Likewise, we cannot come to this Homecoming without recognizing the thousands of immigrants and migrant workers who either have no permanent home or are afraid to leave their homes because of immigration enforcement and the policies of our government. Their circumstances remind us that hospitality is more than a warm greeting or an open door. It is a moral commitment to creating communities where every person is treated with dignity, safety, and compassion.

This Homecoming, therefore, is both a celebration of what God is doing among us and a call to action. “**Our Home, Your Home, God’s Home**” challenges us to embrace an even more radical hospitality and to consider what we must do—as individuals, as a church, and as a community—to ensure that all people have the opportunity not merely to survive, but to thrive.

I want to thank the Homecoming Committee for its leadership and hard work in bringing this day to fruition. I also want to acknowledge the support of the First Church staff and Music Ministry, as well as the many volunteers who have contributed to this celebration. We have developed a wonderful spirit of collaboration here at First Church, one that exemplifies what can happen when good and faithful people come together for a common purpose.

Finally, I thank each of you for your presence at this Homecoming worship service. Today, we celebrate the extraordinary blessings of our church family, the gift of community, and the grace that sustains us. And in the midst of turbulent times, we reaffirm our responsibility to testify to God’s grace and power by opening our hearts, our homes, and our church to others. **Happy Homecoming!**



Worship Service

Eighteenth Sunday After Pentecost

THE PRELUDE

Alleluia

James Tatum

First Church Voices and Third Sunday Band

THE CHIMING OF THE HOUR AND LIGHTING OF THE WORSHIP CANDLES

Lark and Venus Eichelberger, *acolytes*

THE CALL TO WORSHIP AND INVOCATION

Nia and Ava Stephens

*THE OPENING HYMN

What a Fellowship

The Congregation and First Church Chancel Choir

*THE HOMECOMING LITANY

Bette Graves Thomas

THE GLORIA PATRI

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,
as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen. Amen.

THE OCCASION

Zena Martin

THE ANTHEM

I'm Gonna Sing 'Til the Spirit Moves In My Heart
First Church Chancel Choir

Moses Hogan

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND WELCOMING OF VISITORS

The Reverend Dr. Angela Dempsey Williams

OFFERTORY WORDS

Minister Myles-Amir Riley

*"Give and it will be given to you
A good measure, pressed down, shaken together,
Running over, will be put into your lap
For the measure you give, will be the measure you get back"*
—Luke 6:38 NRSV

THE OFFERTORY SONG

Rooted and Growing
First Church Children's Choir
Joy Scrutchings, director

Gospel Growers

THE OFFERTORY PRAYER

Minister Riley

**All that are able please stand.*

*Upon entering the sanctuary, in respect for those worshipping around you,
please turn off cell phones, pagers, and other such devices.*

The next First Friday on October 2nd will feature outstanding saxophonist Mace Hibbard. Please note on Friday, November 6th, the amazing Nnenna Freelon will perform a special First Friday concert in the Sanctuary! Be sure to purchase your tickets for these events on Eventbrite. Scan to purchase.



Parish Concerns

Continue to pray for those seeking healing and dealing with health challenges-Shawn Keyes, Glenda Rowe, Grady and Margaret Gamble, Marcia Nurse, Earl Menchhofer, James Edward Means, Carolyn Thomas Page (CJ), Baby Hailu Hood, Edie Hammond, Cornelius Watts, Franklin Thomas, Steve Parker, Calvin Vismale, Jeanne Rance, Valencia Wilson Thomas, Michele Johnson, Reverend Pamela Smith, S. Renee Clark, Earlene Harris, Jamelia Stroud, Dr. Ruth Simmons-Herts, and Casey Cameron.

Please pray for all who are grieving- Virginia Wadsworth in the loss of her brother Henry Wallace. He passed in Detroit on September 3rd. Pray for the families of Selwyn Howard, Cedric Jordan, Erma Jean Thomas, Axam Garner families, Jack and Rhea Williams.

A Stewardship Thought Inspired by 1 Timothy 6:10

"Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment." Scan to give.



Giving QR Code

Special Thank You

2026 HOMECOMING COMMITTEE

G. Lynne Alston-Leonard

Rev. Dwight D. Andrews

Elizabeth Brown

Della Bryant

Rev. Harold Eichelberger

Kirby Freeman

Zena Martin

Steve Mitchell

Daniel Morris

Desiree Pedescleaux

Min. Myles-Amir Riley

Susan Ross

KP Smith

Julie Tabor

Bette Graves Thomas

Enrique Toliver

Terri Vismale-Morris

Rev. Angela D. Williams

Thank you to the Altar Guild and Servette Club for serving as hosts for our Reception.

Announcements

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL VITALITY SURVEY HAS BEEN LAUNCHED!

This is the first step in our strategic planning journey. So far, response has been less enthusiastic than we'd hoped, and that means we're still missing many voices.

One Body, Many Parts: We Need to Hear from YOU

The Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 12:27 (NRSVUE) that together we are the body of Christ, each of us a distinct and necessary member of it. But a body can't function fully when some of its parts haven't checked in yet.

If you haven't completed the survey, please take time today. It only takes 15-20 minutes and it is anonymous.

Your input directly shapes how First Church will:

- **REFLECT** on the past — what's made us strong
- **GIVE THANKS** in the present — what we value today
- **JOYFULLY ANTICIPATE** the future — where we're headed together

We can't move forward as one body until every part has been heard. Please complete the survey today — survey link and/or QR code:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FirstCongAtlantaParticipant>



Survey QR Code

Directory Update - We're updating our member contact information to ensure accuracy. Please visit firstchurchatl.org, navigate to the Instant Church Directory tab, log in, and verify that your information is correct and up to date. Questions? Contact the church office or email Rev. Harold at harold@firstchurchatl.org.

New College Ministry Class - The College Ministry has launched a new class, "*The Sunday Reset*," held every Sunday at 10:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. If you know a college-aged student, encourage them to join — we discuss daily topics through the lens of the Gospels. Questions? Email Rev. Harold at harold@firstchurchatl.org.

College Ministry Volunteers Needed- We're seeking volunteers for the College Ministry. If you're interested, visit firstchurchatl.org and click the "I Want to Volunteer" button in the College Ministry section, which will take you to a Google Sign-Up Sheet. Questions? Email Rev. Harold at harold@firstchurchatl.org or reach out to Rev. Angela or Min. Myles.

*THE OFFERTORY RESPONSE

We Give Thee But Thine Own

We give thee but thine own, what e'er the gift may be;
all that we have is thine alone, a trust O Lord, from thee.

THE PRAYER HYMN

Pass Me Not O Gentle Savior

The Congregation and First Church Chancel Choir

(All who feel led are encouraged to approach the altar on the last stanza.)

THE PASTORAL PRAYER

The Reverend Dr. Dwight D. Andrews

THE SCRIPTURE LESSONS

Deacon David Demetrius

OLD TESTAMENT — Psalm 84: 1-10

NEW TESTAMENT — Hebrews 3: 1-6

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE GUEST SPEAKER

Elizabeth Brown

AN APPRECIATION OF THE SPEAKER

Eugene Duffy

THE MUSICAL OFFERING

Lord, Prepare Me to be a Sanctuary

J. Thompson/R. Scruggs

First Church Voices and Third Sunday Band

THE MESSAGE

The Honorable Keisha Lance Bottoms

THE HYMN OF INVITATION

Encourage Yourself

Donald Lawrence

First Church Voices and Third Sunday Band

THE INVITATION TO CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Reverend Harold Eichelberger

*THE SERVICE OF SILENCE AND BENEDICTION

The Reverend Ambassador Andrew Young

THE CHORAL BENEDICTION

God Be with You Till We Meet Again

Jeremiah Rankin

First Church Chancel Choir

*Thank you for joining us for our 2026 Homecoming Celebration!
Please join us in the Fellowship Hall immediately following the service
for our Homecoming Reception.*

The Homecoming Litany

Leader: We come together in celebration for the years we have been together as the people of God, in praise and worship, in prayer and study, in service and in stewardship.

Congregation: *We thank God for the many blessings received, for our ancestors whose vision led them to create this congregation in this place, and for this community of faith that embraces the vision and furthers this ministry.*

Leader: We gather today in this sanctuary, not as strangers or visitors, but as a family coming home to the place where faith was planted and nurtured.

Congregation: *We thank God for the doors that have stayed open, the prayers that have paved the way, and the legacy of love that brought us back.*

Leader: We remember our mothers and fathers, our elders and pioneers, who built this house with sweat, sacrifice, and song.

Congregation: *Their faith was our foundation. Their resilience was our roadmap. We honor the great cloud of witnesses who went before us.*

Leader: For every song of Zion sung in a low time, for every testimony shared, and for the persistent grace that kept this church standing through the changing years,

Congregation: *We give God the glory, the honor, and the praise.*

Leader: For every tear that was shed in solace or suffering, joy and thanksgiving,

Congregation: *We give God the glory, the honor, and the praise.*

Leader: For every trial and every triumph, for every challenge and every opportunity,

Congregation: *We give God the glory, the honor, and the praise.*

Leader: We thank you God for the spiritual home you have provided, and we recognize that *our* home is your home, God’s home eternal in the Heavens and on earth.

Congregation: *We give God the glory, the honor, and the praise.*

Leader: Today, we celebrate the bonds of home—renewing old ties, embracing new faces, and committing ourselves to the work that still remains.

All: *Once connected, forever family! With joyful hearts and grateful spirits, we welcome one another home to the grace of God! Amen.*

Guest Speaker

**THE HONORABLE KEISHA LANCE BOTTOMS,
GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE AND
FORMER MAYOR OF ATLANTA**



Keisha Lance Bottoms is the Democratic nominee running to serve as the next governor of Georgia to deliver for working families and stand up against the chaos coming from Washington.

As governor, she will fight to lower costs, expand Medicaid so more Georgians can get the health care coverage they need, and prevent more hospitals—especially those in rural communities—from closing. She will make housing more affordable and crack down on corporate landlords that make it harder for Georgians to buy a home or afford rent. Additionally, she will invest in education across Georgia by guaranteeing pre-K to every 4-year-old, requiring Georgia students to start their education at kindergarten, and recruiting more quality educators by eliminating income taxes for teachers.

Keisha previously served as the 60th mayor of Atlanta from 2018 to 2022. Serving during one of the most challenging times in Atlanta's history through a global pandemic and a racial justice movement, the Bottoms administration made major investments in affordable housing, delivered historic pay raises for police officers and firefighters, supported small businesses, and brought in billions in capital investment. Equally important, the Bottoms administration delivered four years of balanced budgets without resorting to property tax increases, layoffs, or furloughs of city employees. Additionally, city reserves remained at a near-high of \$181 million, exceeding the requirements of the city’s charter.

After her term as mayor, Keisha served as director of the Office of Public Engagement and as a senior advisor to President Biden from 2022 to 2023. She has also served as the chair of the Community Development and Housing Committee and the Census Task Force for the United States Conference of Mayors. Additionally, Keisha served as a trustee for the African American Mayors Association, was selected to chair the Platform Committee for the 2020 Democratic National Convention and served as a DNC vice chair.

Keisha is at least a fifth generation Georgian and has served as a judge and city councilwoman. She resides in Atlanta with her husband, Derek, and their four children.