



WORSHIP AT NINE

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

September 17, 2023

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

WELCOME TO FIRST CHURCH!

If you are visiting today and looking for a church home, welcome! *For more than 170 years our Covenant has been: We covenant with the Lord Jesus Christ and one another, and bind ourselves in the presence of God to live together in all God's ways as revealed to us by the Holy Spirit and holy scripture. The church acknowledges that all members have the right of individual interpretation of the principles of the Christian faith and respects them in their honest convictions. In accordance with the teaching of our Lord, the church recognizes two sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion.*

*Enter to Worship – Depart to Serve. Please use this time for quiet preparation for worship.
'We have waited in silence on your loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of your temple.'
(Psalm 48:9)*

PRELUDE

David Hogrefe, *pianist*

ENTER TO WORSHIP

Julie Roth-Alexander

Leader: The grace of our Savior Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

People: And also with you.

** Please stand as you are able. (* indicates congregation standing)*

L: Though the storm clouds of doubt and fear threaten to overcome us,

P: God leads us into ways of peace.

L: When the darkness of war and the deep pit of anger reach toward us,

P: God lifts and carries us through the darkness with hope and light.

L: Lord of hope and life, be with us today.

P: God of mercy and peace, lead our lives. Amen.

1. My hope is built on noth-ing less Than Je - sus' blood and
 2. When dark-ness veils His love - ly face, I rest on His un -
 3. His oath, His cov - e - nant, His blood Sup - port me in the
 4. When He shall come with trum-pet sound, O may I then in

right - teous-ness; I dare not trust the sweet-est frame, But whol-ly
 chang-ing grace; In ev - ery high and storm - y gale, My an - chor
 whelm-ing flood; When all a - round my soul gives way, He then is
 Him be found, Dressed in His right - teous - ness a - lone, Fault - less to

Refrain

lean on Je - sus' name.
 holds with - in the veil. On Christ, the sol - id Rock, I stand; All
 all my hope and stay.
 stand be - fore the throne.

oth - er ground is sink-ing sand, All oth - er ground is sink-ing sand.

* INVOCATION

The Rev. Joanna Samuelson

L: God be with you.

P: And also with you.

L: Let us pray.

P: O God, because without you we are not able to please you: Mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

* WELCOME AND PASSING OF THE PEACE

The Rev. Dr. Timothy C. Ahrens

L: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

P: And also with you.

L: Let us greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace.

** Please sign the blue Welcome notebook and pass it on to your neighbor so you may greet them by name.*

CHILDREN'S TIME

Melissa Kulwicki and Rev. Samuelson

During the sermon time, the young children are welcome to participate in "Sunday Stories" with Melissa Kulwicki and Anita Silva Coil.

THE HEBREW SCRIPTURE

Exodus 14:19-31

Ms. Roth-Alexander

A reading from the book of Exodus, chapter 14.

The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night.

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. At the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers." So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the LORD tossed the Egyptians into the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great work that the LORD did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the LORD and believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

L: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

P: Thanks be to God.

L: Alleluia! When Israel came out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange speech,

P: Judah became God's sanctuary and Israel God's dominion.

L: The sea beheld it and fled; Jordan turned and went back.

P: The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like young sheep.

L: What ailed you, O sea, that you fled; O Jordan, that you turned back?

P: You mountains, that you skipped like rams; you little hills, like young sheep?

L: Tremble, O earth, at the presence of God, at the presence of the God of Jacob,

P: Who turns the hard rock into a pool of water, the flint into a spring of water.

L: You led out your people with silver and gold; in all their tribes there was not one that stumbled. (Psalm 105:37)

THE GOSPEL

Matthew 18:21-35

Rev. Ahrens

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 18.

Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

L: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

P: Thanks be to God.

SERMON

"Forgive 77 Times or 539 Times – Whatever Works Best for You"

Rev. Ahrens

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Rev. Ahrens

Let us pray as Christ our Savior has taught us.

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,

for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

THE OFFERTORY

To give online, please scan this QR code link, or see additional instructions in the Depart to Serve leaflet:



MISSION INVITATION

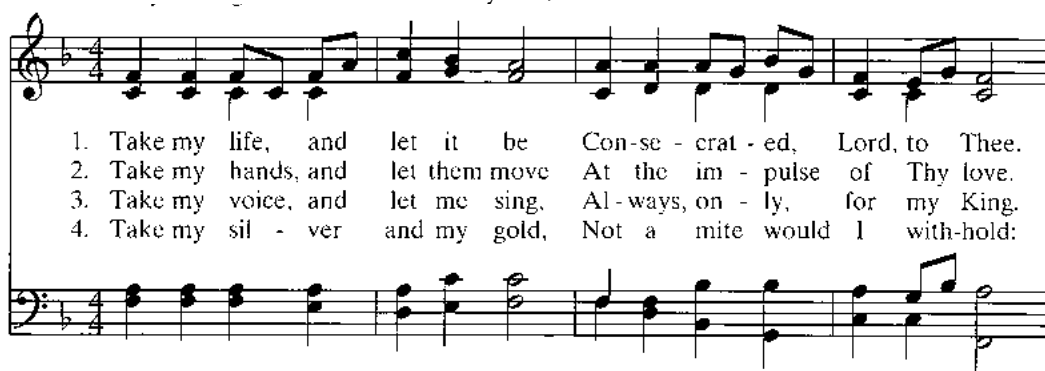
Teresa Conley

Cash and designated gifts go to **Pathway Clubhouse**. Pathway Clubhouse provides a friendly, communal space for adults living with mental illness in Franklin County to participate in the development of social relationships, employment and education opportunities, and community involvement. Using the Clubhouse Model, their psychosocial rehabilitation program hopes to empower its members through participation in new experiences while engaging with fellow members around the Clubhouse. Thank you for your generosity.

OFFERTORY HYMN

Take my life, and let it be

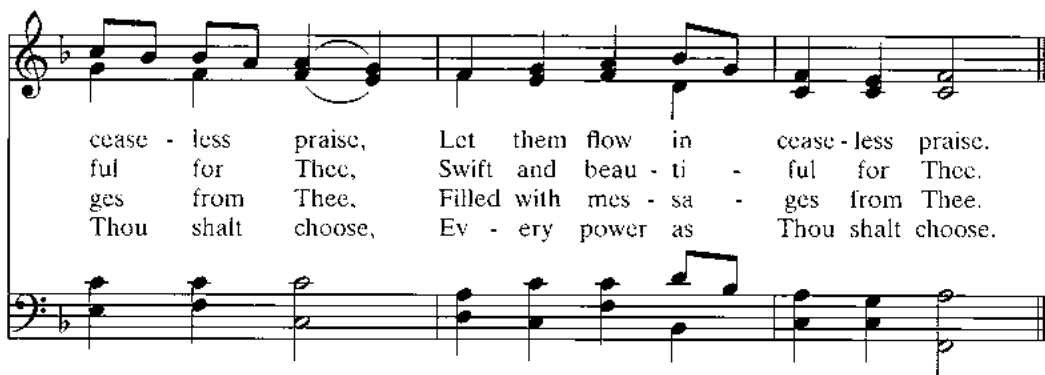
Hendon



1. Take my life, and let it be Con-se - crat - ed, Lord, to Thee.
2. Take my hands, and let them move At the im - pulse of Thy love.
3. Take my voice, and let me sing, Al - ways, on - ly, for my King.
4. Take my sil - ver and my gold, Not a mite would I with-hold:



Take my mo - ments and my days; Let them flow in
Take my feet, and let them be Swift and beau - ti -
Take my lips, and let them be Filled with mes - sa -
Take my in - tel - lect, and use Ev - ery power as



cease - less praise, Let them flow in cease - less praise.
ful for Thee, Swift and beau - ti - ful for Thee.
ges from Thee, Filled with mes - sa - ges from Thee.
Thou shalt choose, Ev - ery power as Thou shalt choose.

5. Take my will, and make it Thine;
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is Thine own;
It shall be Thy royal throne,
It shall be Thy royal throne.

6. Take my love; my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee,
Ever, only, all for Thee.

MUSIC AT COMMUNION

“Taste and see”

Taste and See

Taste and see, taste and see the good - ness
of the Lord. O taste and see, taste and
see the good - ness of the Lord, of the Lord. *Fine*

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

Rev. Ahrens

We give you thanks, Almighty God, that you have brought us from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom, from death to rebirth. Transform our lives with this heavenly food, that we may shine with your love and take to the world the risen life of your Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

COMMUNITY NOTICES - DEPART TO SERVE

Ms. Kulwicki

L: Let us sing the closing hymn as we depart with a heart to serve.

P: **Thanks be to God.**

* CLOSING HYMN

“God be with you”

Randolph

1. God be with you till we meet a - gain; Lov - ing coun - sels
guide, up - hold you, With a Shep - herd's care en - fold you:
God be with you till we meet a - gain.

* BENEDICTION

Rev. Ahrens

POSTLUDE

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Enter to Worship
Depart to Serve

September 17, 2023

This Week at First Church

9/17		9/20	
9 a.m.	Morning Prayer, Communion & Sunday Stories (Parish Hall & Virtual)	10 a.m.	The Largest Table (Kitchen)
10 a.m.	Constitutional Amendment Information Session (Classroom C)	10:30 a.m.	Book Study (Classroom C & Zoom)
	Sunday School for Children and Youth (Various Classrooms)	5:30 p.m.	BREAD House Mtg (Parlor)
11 a.m.	Worship Service & Sunday Stories (Sanctuary & Virtual)	6:30 p.m.	Stephen Ministers Team Mtg (Parish Hall)
12 Noon	Coffee Hour (Parish Hall)	9/21	
12:30 p.m.	BREAD House Mtg (Parlor)	7 p.m.	BREAD House Mtg (Sterrett's Home)
4 p.m.	Choral Evensong (Sanctuary)	7:15 p.m.	First Church Choir Rehearsal (Choir Rm)
9/19		9/22	
6:30 p.m.	Stephen Ministry Team Mtg (Parish Hall)	12 Noon	Faith Mission Dinner Prep (Kitchen)
7 p.m.	Church Council Mtg (Classroom C & Zoom)	9/24	
9/20		9 a.m.	Morning Prayer, Communion & Sunday Stories (Parish Hall & Virtual)
10 a.m.	The Largest Table (Kitchen)	10 a.m.	First Serves (Education Wing)
10:30 a.m.	Book Study (Classroom C & Zoom)	11 a.m.	Worship Service & Sunday Stories (Sanctuary & Virtual)
5:30 p.m.	BREAD House Mtg (Parlor)	12 Noon	Legacy Sunday Picnic (West Lawn)
6:30 p.m.	Stephen Ministers Team Mtg (Parish Hall)		

**First Church Arts
Choral Evensong
Today at 4 p.m.**

Celebrating Hildegard of Bingen. Worship in the beauty of holiness with the First Church Choir.

Legacy Sunday Picnic Sunday, September 24 Following 11 a.m. Service On the West Lawn

Join us outside on the church grounds on Sunday, September 24, immediately following the 11 a.m. service for a potluck picnic! Church Vitality will be grilling some hamburgers and hot dogs (a veggie option as well!). Bring a dish to share and your favorite lawn chair or blanket to enjoy some fellowship with your First Church Family. Water, plates, and utensils will be provided. We will have outdoor games to add to the fun. We can't wait to see you there!

Potluck Guidelines:

A-J Side Dish

K-R Salad

S-Z Dessert

Global Ministries Kenya: Organization of African Instituted Churches

The Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC) is the representative body that brings together African Independent Churches (AICs), offers them a forum for sharing their concerns and hopes, and enables churches to minister effectively to the needs of their members and their communities.

AICs are homegrown African churches, founded originally during the colonial period, that have developed indigenous forms of worship, theology, and social organization, all deeply inspired by a vision that is both Christian and African.

As followers of Jesus Christ, they are called to respond with conviction to challenges such as entrenched poverty, disease, and the breakdown of African cultural and social systems. There are about 60 million AIC members spread across Sub-Saharan Africa and the African Diaspora. The International Headquarters of the OAIC is in Nairobi, Kenya.

Informational Meetings for Proposed Church Constitutional Amendments

Church members are invited to attend one of three informational meetings in September to discuss the proposed amendments to the church constitution that will be voted on at a special congregational meeting this fall.

The informational meetings will be held:

- Sunday, September 17, from 10 to 10:45 a.m. in person in the church's Classroom C.
 - Monday, September 25, from 7 to 8 p.m. over Zoom.
-

Church Growth Commission to Meet September 22

The Church Growth Commission will meet Friday, Sept. 22, at 10:30 a.m. at the church. The purpose of the meeting is:

- to clarify the commission's mission and goals;
- to consider how best to communicate our congregation's extravagant welcome to visitors and potential members;
- to discuss how to better engage church members in the life of our faith community.

Any church member is welcome to attend the meeting. Steve Sterrett is the church growth commissioner.

What is Stephen Ministry?

Stephen Ministry offers skilled, confidential, loving, one to one spiritual and emotional caregiving for those who are experiencing difficult times in their lives.

New Bike Rack

Would you like to ride your bicycle to church? If so, we have a new bike rack where you can secure it! You'll find it in the north parking lot near the elevator!

BREAD 2023 House Meetings

BREAD is ready to kick off the 2023 House Meeting season and will hold 10 different meetings, some in the Church, some on Zoom, and some in our homes. These meetings aim to discover serious problems in our community that can and should be addressed by our elected officials. It is also an excellent opportunity to get to know each other and make new connections.

In the next three weeks you may receive a call from one of our team members to participate, but please feel free to reach out yourself, and call one of the hosts listed below. House Meetings are scheduled between September 13 and October 20.

Hope to see you all! BREAD rises!

Tim Ahrens (614-228-1741)

Antoinette Koolemans-Beynen (240-557-9770)

Bill Catus (614-447-1944)

Debi Cunningham (614-323-6319)

Gary Hammond (614-512-1404)

Jill Hultin (646-522-0250)

Todd Jacobson (612-718-3105)

Jim Lowe (614-397-7512)

Kaye Martin (740-438-1894)

Joanna Samuelson (214-995-3525)

Steve Sterrett (614-262-4586)

BREAD 2023 House Meetings

Date	Time	Host(s)	Location
Sept. 17	12:30 PM	Tim Ahrens/Kaye Martin	Parlor
Sept. 20	5:30 PM	Bill Catus	Parlor
Sept. 21	7:00 PM	Steve Sterrett	Home of Steve Sterrett
Sept. 28	7:00 PM	Jill Hultin	Home of Jill Hultin
Sept. 28	10:00 AM	Joanna Samuelson/Debi Cunningham	Classroom C & Zoom
Oct. 2	7:00 PM	Tim Ahrens/Kaye Martin	Home of Kaye Martin
Oct. 8	12:30 PM	Gary Hammond	Parlor
Oct. 10	7:00 PM	Todd Jacobson	Home of Todd Jacobson
Oct. 12	6:00 PM	Antoinette Beynen	Westminister Thurber
Oct. 18	7:00 PM	Jim and Gail Lowe	Zoom

Keep in Prayer

In celebration of the recent marriages of Tim Ahren's niece, Roberta Ahrens in Barcelona, Spain; and Bob and Diana Kutschbach's daughter, Carly Kutschbach in Malibu, California.

Members Jane Weddle; Bill Nirote; Lynn Wallich; Emily Schmitt; Karl Danneberger; Dan Axt; Karl Schaab; Rick Sayre; Anne Morganstern; Martha Huey; Twink Starr; Lola Edwards; Betsy Zahn; Janice White; John Carter and Mary Kay Beall Carter.

Family and friends Martha Huey's cousin, Martha Dieckmann; Rev. Dale Rosenberger; Melody Leidheiser's niece and husband, Kathy and Mick Clark; Miranda Brooks and son, Wilson; Amy Brooks' father, Michael Hamlin; Mary Day Fewlass' friend, Tim Holt; Annette McCormick's father, Charles McCormick; Diana and Bob Kutschbach's cousin, Carson Samples; Tim Ahrens and Susan Sitler's friends, Jennifer and Yisrael and their son, Freddie; Melissa Kulwicki's mother, Judy Blandi; Liz Kuhn; Celecia Smith; LJ Cooks' mother, Gloria Roane; Karl and Sallie Danneberger's friend, Ron Kendzier; Emily Wilson's friend, Thane Fanfulik, her sister and niece, Karen Newcomb and Stasia Hylas, and friend Julia Wharff Piermont; Todd Cunningham and family's aunt, Mary Ann Dykes; Lisa Fravel Dean's nephew, Joshua Ross; Lee Wetmore's friends, Ray and Mary Pollard; Susie Loik's friend and neighbor, Dottie Clark; Matt Farabaugh's friend Pamela Mineo; Victor John's parents, Charles and Mary Jane John.

Those who mourn loved ones Jackie Dean and family on the death of her niece, Henrietta Andrews; Tim Ahren's friend, Richard Murch and family on the death of his step-daughter, Beth Little; Sarah Giffen on the death of her sister-in-law, Lois Makar; Victor John, his sister, Amanda John, her husband Gerald Young, niece Ella Young, and Victor's parents, on the recent loss of Victor's nephew, Matthias; the family and friends of Jenkins Smith; Martha Wilson on the death of her uncle, Paul Edward Player; Melva Fisher on the death of her friend, Steve Wood; and the family and friends of Joanne Morse.

We pray for our Stephen Ministry team in seeking God's presence in their work, to fill them full of faith as they train as caregiving ministers, and to thank God for all the gifts of our church members.

We pray for the nearly than 2500 people killed and the survivors of the earthquake in Morrocco.

In the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle, we pray for the people and churches of Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay. We also pray for our UCC partner in mission, the Organization of African Instituted Churches (Oaic) in Kenya.

Please note that individuals will remain on the prayer list for three weeks, unless specified to clergy or staff.

Give

At First Church, our financial resources enable us to "Enter to worship, depart to serve." You can support the mission and ministry of First Church now by using Realm, EasyTithe or PayPal, by visiting <https://www.first-church.org/give/>, or by sending your offering directly to First Congregational Church, 444 E. Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215. For more information, please contact Annette McCormick at amccormick@firstchurch.org.

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Church Leadership

Senior Minister: Rev. Dr. Timothy C. Ahrens, D.Min., M.Div.
Designated Minister: Rev. Joanna Samuelson, M.Div.
Minister of Music: Joshua Stafford, M.M.
Commissioned Minister for Social Justice: Tom Brownfield
Commissioned Minister for Spiritual Formation and Direction: Jacquelyn Dean
Commissioned Stephen Ministry Leader: Gary Glover
Administrative Manager: Amy Wagner
Communications Manager: Melissa Kulwicki
Office Assistant: Pat Patterson
Business Administrator: Annette McCormick
Building and Grounds Superintendent: Quang Pham
Custodians: Alexis Wayne
Wedding Coordinators: Amy Wagner, Shelly Gies, Margaret Cipriani
Nursery Staff: Miranda Brooks, Shelly Gies, Celecia Smith

Senior Deacon: Martha Wilson
Senior Deacon-elect: Tom Kiesel
Deacons: Nan Kreimer, Gail Lowe, James Lowe, Allison Lowery Palmer, Fran Panek, Joel Mathias, Dayna McCrary, Matt Myers, Hank Wilson, Martha Worth

Church Council Leadership

Moderator: Gregory Halbe
Moderator-elect: Sarah Reed
Treasurer: James Velo
Treasurer-elect: Ramona Moenter
Secretary: Antoinette Koolemans-Beynen
Secretary-elect: Martha Wilson
Nominating Chair: Sarah Reed

Commissioners

Administration: Thomas Brownfield
Administration-elect: David Hogrefe
Church Growth: Steve Sterrett
Church Growth-elect:
Church Vitality: Wendy Kennedy
Church Vitality-elect: Annette McCormick
Education: Janice Taft
Education-elect: Mariner Taft
House & Grounds: Mike Kennedy
House & Grounds-elect: Eric Klintworth
Justice & Mercy: Kris Brant
Justice & Mercy-elect: Janet Miller
Music, Arts & Heritage: Melissa Kulwicki
Music, Arts & Heritage-elect: Jim Griffin
Members-at-Large: Jacquelyn Dean

Board of Trustees

Chairperson: Sue Cook
Trustees: Cindy Conn (Treasurer), Greg Halbe, Elizabeth Iannarino, Todd Jacobson, Victor John, Melody Leidheiser, Janet Miller, Judy Smith, (Secretary), Hugh Schultz



Welcome Statement

You are welcomed, affirmed, and loved here; our faith informs us that you are a child of a loving God. Your characteristics and gifts will enrich our congregation. In this community, you will be celebrated, embraced, and honored, no matter how you identify or how your identity may evolve. Wherever you are on your faith journey, we invite you to join us in our diverse yet united experience.

First Church is a Faith Community

- † Called together by God, the Creator and Sustainer of life, to worship, pray and serve;
- † Led by Jesus Christ, our Teacher and Savior, to learn the faith and welcome all God's children;
- † Empowered by the Holy Spirit to witness God's love and justice between ourselves, and throughout the world.

Open and Affirming Statement

We, the members of First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, welcome and affirm all. We believe we are all created in God's image and called to love our neighbors as Jesus loves us. We believe we are many members, but one body in Christ, called to unite all people in God's love. We are a community seeking God's presence and love in our lives. We seek to unite persons of all ages, races, nationalities, ethnicities, sexual orientations, sexes, gender identities and expressions, family structures, mental, intellectual and physical conditions, economic circumstances, political, theological and faith backgrounds. Together in our diversity, and being empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit, we will "do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God." (Micah 6:8)

—Adopted September 8, 2002 by the congregation

Revisions adopted January 27, 2019 by the congregation



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