



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

WORSHIP AT NINE
APRIL 28, 2024
THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

WELCOME TO FIRST CHURCH!

If you are visiting today and looking for a church home, welcome! For more than 171, 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.

LEADERSHIP IN TODAY'S LITURGY

The Rev. Amanda Conley, *preacher*

The Rev. Ronald Botts, *officiant*

The Rev. Adam Long, *liturgist*

David Hogrefe, *pianist*

Geoff Dean, *livestream ministry*

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

ENTER TO WORSHIP

The Rev. Adam Long

Leader: Alleluia! Christ is risen!

People: **Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

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

Leader: God is in our midst, forming us to be God's own people.

People: **Though the way may be difficult, God will be with us.**

Leader: We need not fear.

People: **In the Lord we will take our refuge, for God is our strength.**

Leader: Come to the Lord who will surround you with God's own righteousness.

People: **Lord, open our hearts and our spirits so that we may faithfully follow you. Amen.**

*OPENING HYMN

Bridegroom, David Peter Cutts, 1969

“Like the murmur of the dove’s song”

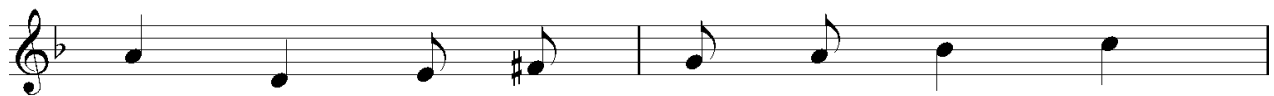
Carl P. Daw Jr., 1982



1 Like the mur - mur of the dove’s song, like the
2 To the mem - bers of Christ’s Bo - dy, to the
3 With the heal - ing of di - vi - sion, with the



chal - lenge of her flight, like the vig - or of the
branch - es of the Vine, to the Church in faith as -
cease - less voice of prayer, with the power to love and



wind’s rush, like the new flame’s ea - ger
sem - bled, to her midst as gift and
wit - ness, with the peace be - yond com -



might: come, — Ho - ly Spi - rit, come.
sign: come, — Ho - ly Spi - rit, come.
pare: come, — Ho - ly Spi - rit, come.

*INVOCATION

The Rev. Ronald Botts

Leader: God be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Let us pray.

People: Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow his steps in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

*WELCOME AND PASSING OF THE PEACE

The Rev. Amanda Conley

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

People: And also with you.

Leader: Let us greet one another with a sign of Christ’s peace.

** When you return to your seat, please find the blue Welcome notebook, sign it and pass it on to your neighbor so you may greet them by name.*

CHILDREN’S TIME

Rev. Botts

Leader: A reading from the book of Acts, the eighth chapter.

An angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,
so he does not open his mouth.

In his humiliation justice was denied him.
Who can describe his generation?
For his life is taken away from the earth."

The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?" He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Leader: The Word of God for the people of God.

People: Thanks be to God.

The poor shall eat and be satisfied,
and those who seek you shall praise you:
"May your heart live forever!"

**All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to you,
and all the families of the nations shall bow before you.**

For yours is the royal power, O God;
you rule over the nations.

**To you alone all who sleep in the earth bow down in worship;
all who go down to the dust fall before you.**

My soul shall live for you;
my descendants shall serve you;
they shall be known as yours forever.

**They shall come and make known to a people yet unborn
the saving deeds that you have done.**

Leader: A reading from the Gospel according to John, the fifteenth chapter.

Jesus said to his disciples, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples."

Leader: The Word of God for the people of God.

People: Thanks be to God.

SERMON

"Blessings on the Blossom, Blessings on the Fruit"

Rev. Conley

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Rev. Botts

Leader: Let us pray as Christ our Savior has taught us.

All: 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, or see additional instructions in Depart to Serve:



MISSION INVITATION

Kris Brant

Cash and designated gifts go to support the **Good Samaritan Fund**. The Good Samaritan Fund provides help every month to those who come to First Church in need. Thank you for your generosity.

OFFERTORY HYMN

"Love divine, all loves excelling"

Hyfrydol, Rowland Hugh Prichard, 1831

Charles Wesley, 1747

1 Love di - vine, all loves ex - cel - ling, Joy of heaven, to
 2 Breathe, O breathe thy lov - ing Spir - it in - to ev - ery
 3 Come, Al - might - y, to de - liv - er; let us all thy
 4 Fin - ish then thy new cre - a - tion; pure and spot - less

earth come down, fix in us thy hum - ble dwell - ing; all thy
 trou - bled breast; let us all in thee in - her - it; let us
 life re - ceive; sud - den - ly re - turn, and nev - er, nev - er -
 let us be; let us see thy great sal - va - tion per - fect -

faith - ful mer - cies crown. Je - sus, thou art all com - pas - sion;
 find the prom - ised rest. Take a - way the love of sin - ning;
 more thy tem - ples leave. Thee we would be al - ways bless - ing,
 ly re - stored in thee: changed from glo - ry in - to glo - ry,

pure, un - bound - ed love thou art; vis - it us with
 Al - pha and O - me - ga be; end of faith, as
 serve thee as thy hosts a - bove, pray, and praise thee
 till in heaven we take our place, till we cast our

thy sal - va - tion; en - ter ev - ery trem - bling heart.
 its be - gin - ning, set our hearts at lib - er - ty.
 with - out ceas - ing, glo - ry in thy per - fect love.
 crowns be - fore thee, lost in won - der, love, and praise.

COMMUNION
COMMUNION HYMN
"Eat this bread"

Rev. Botts
Berthier, Jacques Berthier, 1984
Robert J. Batastini and Taizé Community, 1984

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of three systems of two staves each (treble and bass clef). The lyrics are: "Eat this bread; drink this cup; come to me and never be hungry. Eat this bread; drink this cup; trust in me and you will not thirst."

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

Rev. Conley

Leader: Let us pray.

All: 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

Rev. Botts

Leader Let us depart with a heart to serve.

People: Thanks be to God.

*CLOSING HYMN
"God be with you till we meet again"

Randolph, Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1906
Jeremiah Eames Rankin, 1880

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.

The image shows a three-system musical score for the hymn "God be with you till we meet again". Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The lyrics are: "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." The music is written in a simple, hymn-like style with a steady accompaniment.

*BENEDICTION

Rev. Conley

POSTLUDE

Please be seated for the postlude.

Thank you for attending worship this morning. We hope that you have found peace and grace here and invite you to return often. If you would like more information or have any questions about First Church, please ask anyone wearing a name tag. We would be delighted to assist you.

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Enter to Worship
Depart to Serve

April 28, 2024

This Week at First Church

Sunday, April 28

- 9 a.m. Morning Prayer & Holy Communion
(Parish Hall & Virtual)
- 10 a.m. Bible Study (Classroom C)
First Serves (Classroom D)
- 11 a.m. Worship Service (Sanctuary & Virtual)
- 12:30 p.m. Picnic in the Park
(Gladden Social Justice Park)
- 2 p.m. Park Tree Dedication
(Gladden Social Justice Park)

Monday, April 29

- 12 Noon Grief Support Group
(Classroom C & Zoom)

Tuesday, April 30

- 10:30 a.m. Archives Workday
(Adult Library & Lower Narthex)
- 4:30 p.m. Church Vitality Mtg (Zoom)
- 5:15 p.m. Laundry Love (Wash Land)

Wednesday, May 1

- 10:30 a.m. Book Study (Classroom C & Zoom)
- 12:15 p.m. Wednesday Meditations (Sanctuary)
- 5:30 p.m. Stephen Ministers Meet & Greet (Parlor)
- 6:30 p.m. Stephen Ministers Monthly Mtg
(Fanning Rm)
- 7 p.m. Book Club (Zoom)

Thursday, May 2

- 1:30 p.m. Healthy Congregations Leadership Team
(Parish Family Rm)
- 4:30 p.m. Choristers (Choir Rm)
- 6 p.m. Bell Choir Rehearsal (Bell Rm)
- 7:15 p.m. First Church Choir Rehearsal (Choir Rm)

Saturday, May 4

- 10:30 a.m. Sacred Earth Mtg (Adult Library)

Sunday, May 5

- 9 a.m. Morning Prayer & Holy Communion
(Parish Hall & Virtual)
- 10 a.m. Bible Study (Classroom C)
Sunday School Classes (Various Classrooms)
- 11 a.m. Worship Service & Holy Communion
(Sanctuary & Virtual)
- 12:30 p.m. Confirmation Class (Classroom C)
- 4 p.m. Concerts at First Church (Sanctuary)

Washington Gladden Social Justice Park Earth Day Event Today

Picnic at 12:30 p.m., Dedication at 2 p.m.

Mark your calendars! In the week when we celebrate Earth Day, more than 40 trees – including elm, hornbeam, redbud, cherry, and Japanese maple – will be dedicated at Sunday, April 28, at 2 p.m. These trees have been given in honor or in remembrance of a variety of people. They help to beautify the unique Social Justice Park while supporting the City's Urban Forestry Masterplan. All are welcome to attend this brief ceremony. You also are invited to a Picnic in the Park that will begin at 12:30 p.m. prior to the dedication event. Food and beverages will be provided.

Calling All Archives Supporters!

We need many willing hands to help file important documents from our church history into the appropriate year boxes. We will work on **April 30 from 10:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m.** Come as little or as long as you like and feel free to bring your lunch, if you choose. The work session will start in the Adult Library at 10:30 a.m.; if you come later, please go straight to the Lower Narthex which will be the main staging area. Please let Greg Duncan know of your availability (interpret@earthlink.net) or if you can lend a helping hand at the last minute, just come!

Wednesday Meditation

Joshua Stafford, organist

Wednesday, May 1, 12:15 p.m.

Join us as our Minister of Music, Joshua Stafford, offers the final Wednesday Meditation of our 2023-2024 Season on the Beckerath organ.

The Hunchback of Notre Dame

Sunday, May 5, 4 p.m.

Organist Joshua Stafford provides the improvised soundtrack to this 1923 silent masterpiece on our glorious Kimball Organ. Lon Chaney gives an unforgettable performance starring as the tragic Quasimodo.

Dress Like it's 1923

Don your favorite fascinator, cloche, Derby hat, pinstripe suit, vest, flapper dress, or fedora when you attend our First Church Arts showing of "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" accompanied by Joshua Stafford. Create your 1920's outfit and join the fun!

**First Church Book Club:
Wednesday, May 1, 7 p.m.**

The Wright Brothers

Wednesday, June 5, 7 p.m.

The Fraud

Both on Zoom

Come enjoy lively conversation and fellowship this May and June with the First Church Book Club.

On Wednesday, May 1, Jean Lebold will lead a discussion of David McCullough's biography *The Wright Brothers*. Ohio inventors Wilbur and Orville Wright were modest bicycle mechanics in Dayton at the turn of the 20th century. Dedicated to the idea that man could fly, together they risked their lives in the first attempts at human flight—and their success paved the way for airplanes, aviation, and space flight. You'll be amazed at their story!

On Wednesday, June 5, Andrew Welsh-Huggins will lead a discussion of Zadie Smith's smart, funny historical novel *The Fraud*, based on a famous 1873 British trial that was a media sensation. An uneducated butcher from east London claims to be the heir to a grand estate. Is it true? Smith's novel travels between England and Jamaica, examining freedom, self-delusion, women's independence, racism, slavery, class disparity, storytelling, and the nature of truth. In a world of hypocrisy and self-deception, deciding what's real is complicated.

Questions? Want to receive book club emails? Please call Kathy Reed at 614-442-7742.

The Times, They Are a Changing....

First Congregational Church has embarked on a years-long transition process to become a healthier congregation that continues to offer vital and justice-minded ministry in Columbus and Central Ohio. The Transition Team, comprised of members Todd Cunningham, Jackie Dean, Scott Graham, Greg Halbe, Pavan Peter, Sarah Reed, Rev. Joanna Samuelson, and Joshua Stafford, defines their purpose: Through the leading of the Holy Spirit, the Transition Team a) will oversee a practical plan for celebrating the retirement of Rev. Dr. Timothy Ahrens; b) create an interim ministry plan; c) envision ministry that moves First Congregational Church into the future; and d) create a long-term plan for professional leadership. The process to envision our future will also re-energize the congregation and strengthen our connections to the denomination.

On Saturday, October 19, 2024, the congregation, friends, and family of Rev. Dr. Timothy Ahrens will gather to celebrate the ministry of First Church in the last twenty-five years. On October 20, Rev. Ahrens will lead worship for the last time as Senior Minister. After that, he will take a month-long vacation, with his employment at First Congregational Church ending on November 21. The Transition Team plans for an Interim Minister to begin leadership on December 1, 2024.

A Transition Team will continue to work with our Interim Minister and our Designated Minister, Rev. Joanna Samuelson, to guide us as we embrace our strengths and opportunities, while also identifying the weaknesses and threats that may hinder our future development as a healthy congregation.

I invite every member of First Church to join one of the listening sessions that will be led by Transition Team members. Everyone's voice is important and needed, as we become a stronger community in Christ's church. Please seek out any member of the Team to share your concerns and dreams for the future. The times, they are a changing.... And we are all part of the change.

Peace and grace,
Sarah Reed, Moderator-Elect

Wednesday Brunch
Wednesday, May 8, 12 p.m.
J Liu's
6880 N. High Street, Worthington

Join us at J Liu's for a midweek lunch together with others from First Church. The atmosphere is a unique vision of modern, fusion-style fine dining, offering Asian, Italian, and American. Click the QR Code below to register.



Keep in Prayer

Members Scott Warrick; Clinton Brown; John and Francille Firebaugh; Nick Boriin; Tom Bishop; Kathy Brownfield; Steven Anderson; John Carter and Mary Kay Beall Carter; Dan Axt; Rick Sayre; Anne Morganstern; Martha Huey; Twink Starr; Janice White.

Family and friends Annette McCormick's father, Charles McCormick; Margaret Cipriani's friend, Kathryn Schlarb; Amy Wagner's friend, Brenda Jackson; Barry Moenter's brother-in-law, Tom Huss; Joanna Samuelson's friend, Tijuana Scott; Gilda Perry's friend, Kathryn Schlarb; L.J. and Gretchen Cooks' brother, Kione Cooks; Jim Griffin's friends, Andy Bell and John Alatsis; Jill Hultin's brother, Ken Hultin; Mary Ann Jacobson's nephew, Peter Poppleton; Diana and Bob Kutschbach's cousin, Carson Samples; Susie Loik's grandson, Alex Glover and his parents, Kristen and Wes; Arevena Nirote's sister and brother-in-law, Marlene and Gary Gallion; Fran and Bruce Panek's friends, Richard and Beverly Cienas; Victor John's cousin, Devin Endlick, and his parents, Charles and Mary Jane, and sister; and Martha Huey's sister, Stephanie Childs and cousin, Martha Dieckmann.

Those who mourn loved ones Matt Bendick on the death of his mother, Jan Bendick; and Kelly Dodd on the death of her mother, Estelle Stout.

We keep Stephen Ministers in prayer as they care for our church members.

In the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle, we pray for the people and churches in Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. We also pray for our UCC partner in mission, the National Council of Churches in Korea.

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.

Cash and designated gifts go to support the **Good Samaritan Fund**. The Good Samaritan Fund provides help every month to those who come to First Church in need. Thank you for your generosity.

Upcoming Mission Offerings

April 28	Good Samaritan
May 5	B.R.E.A.D.
May 12	CelebrateOne

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.

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, Bill McCabe

Wedding Coordinators: Amy Wagner, Shelly Gies, Margaret Cipriani

Nursery Staff: Miranda Brooks, Shelly Gies, Celecia Smith

Commissioned Minister for Social Justice: Tom Brownfield

Commissioned Minister for Spiritual Formation and Direction: Jacquelyn Dean

Stephen Leader and Stephen Ministry Program Coordinator: Gary Glover

Stephen Leader and Stephen Ministry Training Coordinator: Wendy Kennedy

Stephen Leader and Stephen Ministry Referrals Coordinator: Susie Loik

Senior Deacon: Tom Kiesel

Deacons: Allen Baker, Heather Jones, Brian Kemp, Nan Kreimer, Allison Lowery Palmer, Dayna McCrary, Matt Myers, Fran Panek, Andy Smith Verhage, Thom Smith, Lynn Wallich, Martha Worth

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Chairperson: Frank Cook

Trustees: Greg Halbe, Elizabeth Iannarino, Todd Jacobson, Victor John, Melody Leidheiser, Janet Miller, Judy Smith, (Secretary), Hugh Schultz

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

Church Stewardship and Church Growth: Janice Taft

Church Stewardship and Church Growth-elect:

Church Vitality: Pat Patterson

Church Vitality-elect:

Communications and Technology Commission: Mike Kennedy

Communications and Technology Commission-elect: Stefan Duga

Faith Formation Commission: Mariner Taft

Faith Formation Commission-elect: Cami Curren

House & Grounds: Eric Klintworth

House & Grounds-elect:

Justice & Mercy: Janet Miller

Justice & Mercy-elect:

Music, Arts & Heritage: Jim Griffin

Music, Arts & Heritage-elect: Cheryl Hoskinson

Member-at-Large: Jacquelyn Dean

Personnel: David Hogrefe

Personnel-elect: Sandra Mathias

Youth Member-at-Large:

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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