



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

WORSHIP AT NINE
FEBRUARY 23, 2025
SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

WELCOME TO FIRST CHURCH!

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.

Please use this time for quiet preparation for worship.

GATHERING

PRELUDE

WELCOME

SHARING AND PASSING OF THE PEACE

Rev. Joanna

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

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

*OPENING PRAYER

Rev. Becky

Leader: God of abundant mercy,
You are the source of human dignity,
You alone can turn evil into good, sorrow into rejoicing, and death into everlasting life.
Teach us your way of grace -

People: **To meet hatred with kindness,
To answer curses with blessing.
To love without holding back,
To give without thought of return.
All in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

*GATHERING HYMN

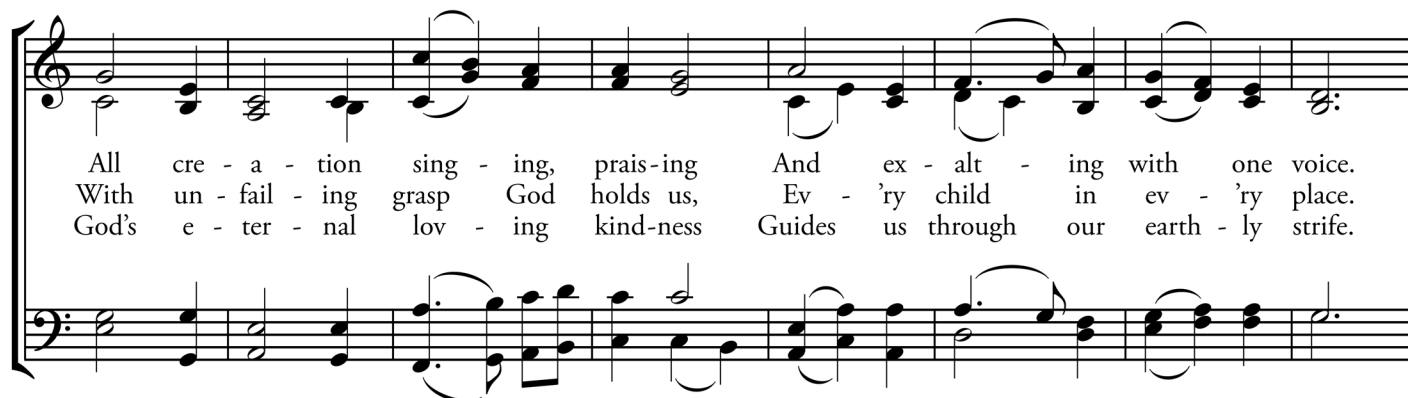
"God is love"

Abbot's Leigh, Cyril Vincent Taylor, 1941

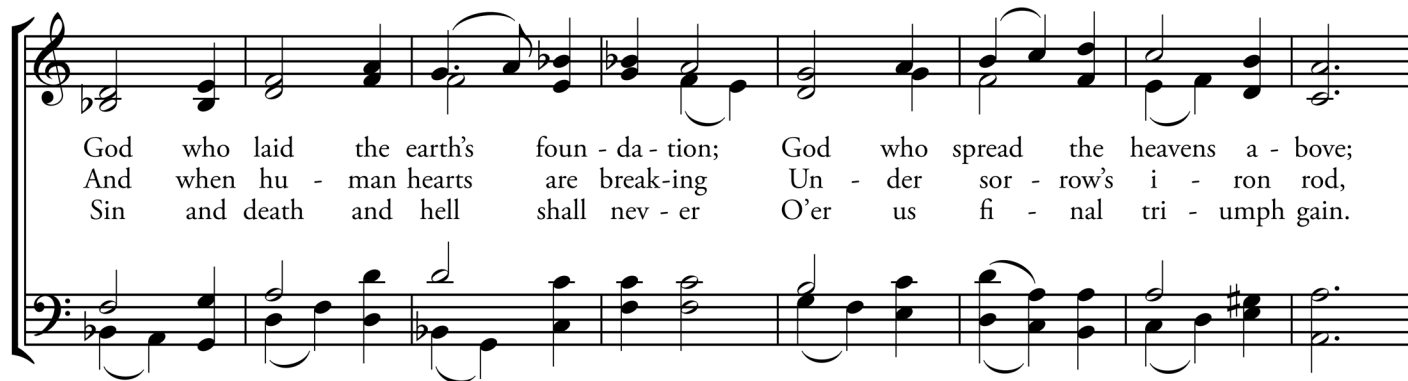
Timothy Rees, 1922, alt.



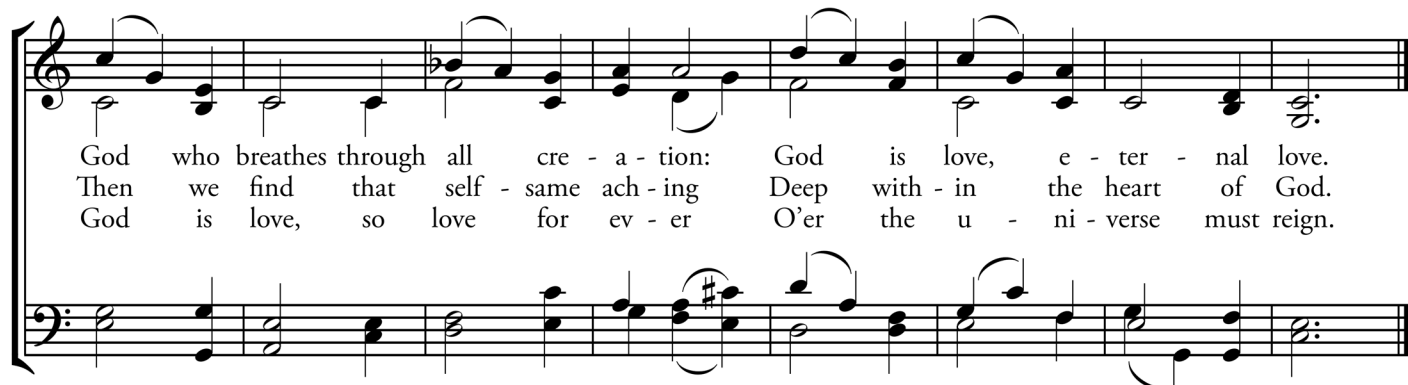
1. God is love! The heav'ns are tell - ing. God is love, let earth re - joice;
 2. God is love, and love en - folds us, All the world in one em - brace:
 3. God is love! With mer - cy bound-less God sus - tains all hu - man life.



All cre - a - tion sing - ing, prais - ing And ex - alt - ing with one voice.
 With un - fail - ing grasp God holds us, Ev - 'ry child in ev - 'ry place.
 God's e - ter - nal lov - ing kind-ness Guides us through our earth - ly strife.



God who laid the earth's foun - da - tion; God who spread the heavens a - bove;
 And when hu - man hearts are break - ing Un - der sor - row's i - ron rod,
 Sin and death and hell shall nev - er O'er us fi - nal tri - umph gain.



God who breathes through all cre - a - tion: God is love, e - ter - nal love.
 Then we find that self - same ach - ing Deep with - in the heart of God.
 God is love, so love for ev - er O'er the u - ni - verse must reign.

Leader: Holy and Beloved God, you call us by name,
 declaring us precious, honored, and loved.
 Yet we confess that we often fail to see ourselves as you see us.
 We cling to the chaff in our lives—fear, selfishness, and pride—
 instead of releasing it to you.
 We admit that we sometimes view others as rivals
 rather than as your beloved children,
 forgetting that your salvation extends to all.

**People: Forgive us, O God, for the ways we resist your refining love.
 Help us to live as those who are redeemed,
 sharing your grace and mercy with a world
 longing to feel precious, honored, and loved.
 Remind us of your boundless love,
 and help us carry a portion within our hearts. Amen.**

Time of silent prayer and reflection

Leader: Beloved of God, hear this good news: The One who formed you and called you by name
 declares, “You are mine.” Through Christ, all that is evil within us is taken away, while all
 that is good within us is redeemed and restored. In love, God gathers us in, and pours out
 mercy beyond measure. In Christ, we are forgiven, and God says to us all: “You are dearly
 loved.” Amen.

CHILDREN’S TIME

Melissa Kulwicki

*During the sermon time, the young children are welcome to participate in “Sunday Stories”
 with Melissa Kulwicki and Leslie Fulford.*

LISTENING

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

GENESIS 45:3-11, 15

Maggie Myers

Leader: A reading from the book of Genesis, the forty-fifth chapter.
 Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?” But his brothers could not answer
 him, so dismayed were they at his presence.
 Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come closer to me.” And they came closer. He said, “I am your
 brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves,
 because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the
 land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest.
 God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many
 survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord
 of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father and say to him,
 ‘Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. You
 shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children’s
 children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. I will provide for you there--since
 there are five more years of famine to come--so that you and your household, and all that you have,
 will not come to poverty.’”

And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.

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

People: Thanks be to God.

PSALM 37:3-7, 39-40

Maggie Myers

Trust in the Lord and do Good;

Live in the land and enjoy security.

Take delight in the Lord,

And he will give you the desires of your heart.

Commit your way to our God.

Trust in God and Yahweh will act.

God will make your vindication shine like the light

And the justice of your cause like the noon day.

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently

Do not fret over those who prosper in their way

Over those who carry out evil devices.

The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord

God is their refuge in the time of trouble

Yahweh helps them and rescues them;

God rescues them from the wicked and saves them

Because they take refuge in him.

LUKE 6:27-38

Rev. Becky

Leader: A reading from the gospel according to Luke, the sixth chapter.

Jesus said, "I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; 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."

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

People: Thanks be to God.

REFLECTION

Rev. Becky

RESPONDING

HYMN OF PREPARATION

"There's a wideness in God's mercy"

In Babilone, Dutch melody

Frederick William Farber, 1854, alt.

1 There's a wide-ness in God's mer-cy, like the wide-ness
2 For the love of God is broad-er than the mea-sures

of the sea. There's a kind-ness in God's jus-tice,
of the mind. And the heart of the E-ter-nal

which is more than lib-er-ty. There is no place where earth's
is most won-der-ful-ly kind. If our love were but more

sor-rows are more felt than up in heaven. There is no place
faith-ful, we would glad-ly trust God's Word, and our lives re-

where earth's fail-ings have such kind-ly judg-ment given.
flect thanks-giv-ing for the good-ness of our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Rev. Joanna

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

Alice H. Faust

Cash and designated gifts go to support the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Ohio Foundation. The Foundation champions constitutional and other fundamental rights, and pursues racial, economic, gender, and social equity, without political partisanship. Thank you for your generosity.

OFFERTORY MUSIC

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Rev. Joanna

All: **Accept these gifts, we humbly pray, O God.**
Let them give you honor and glory as we serve the needs of your people.
And let the called and redeemed of God say, "Amen."

COMMUNION

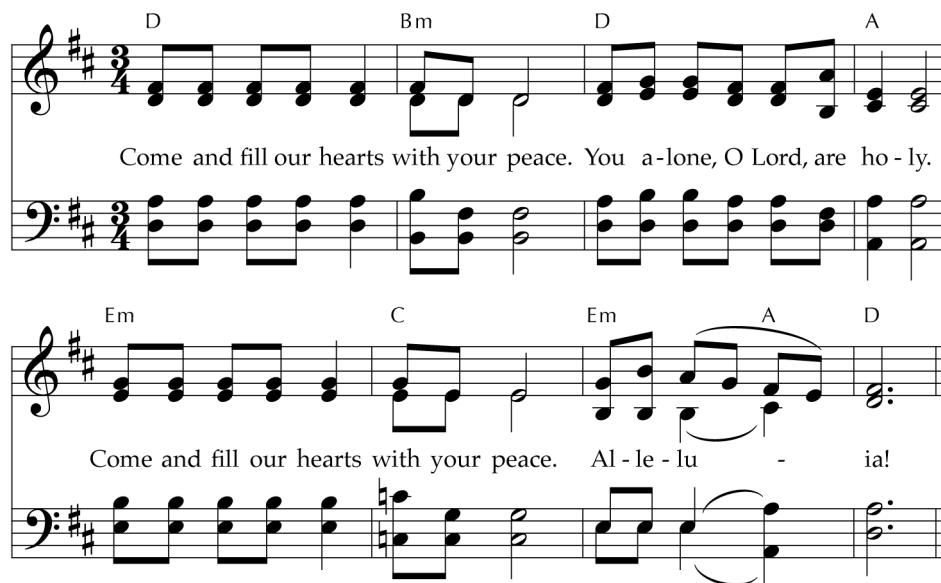
Rev. Becky and Rev. Joanna

COMMUNION HYMN

Confitemini Domino, Jacques Berthier, 1982

"Come and fill our hearts"

Jacques Berthier, 1982



The musical score is written for two staves, Treble and Bass clef, in the key of D major (two sharps) and 3/4 time. The melody is primarily in the Treble clef, with the Bass clef providing harmonic support. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Chords indicated above the staff: D, Bm, D, A, Em, C, Em, A, D.

Lyrics: Come and fill our hearts with your peace. You a-lone, O Lord, are ho-ly. Come and fill our hearts with your peace. Al-le-lu-ia!

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Rev. Joanna

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.**

SENDING

COMMUNITY NOTICES - DEPART TO SERVE

Melissa Kulwicki

Leader Let us depart with a heart to serve.

People: Thanks be to God.

*BENEDICTION

Rev. Becky

*CLOSING HYMN

Bernadette Farrell, 1993

"Christ, be our light"

Refrain

Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the
dark - ness. Christ, be our light! Shine in your
church gath - ered to - day.

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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"Christ, be our light" Words and music by Bernadette Farrell. ©1993 OCP. All rights reserved.

LEADERSHIP IN TODAY'S LITURGY

The Rev. Becky David, *preacher*

The Rev. Joanna Samuelson, *worship leader*

Maggie Myers, *liturgist*

Melissa Kulwicki, *worship leader*

Ann Eliot, *pianist*

Geoffrey Dean, *livestream ministry*

Enter to Worship
Depart to Serve

February 23, 2025

This Week at First Church

Sunday, February 23

- 9 a.m. Informal Worship Service (Parish Hall)
- 10 a.m. The Bible in Context (Classroom C)
Sunday School (Classrooms B, E & F)
Parent Conversations (Adult Library)
- 11 a.m. Worship Service (Sanctuary)
- 12:15 p.m. Deacons Mtg + Lunch (Sanctuary & Fanning Rm)
- 4 p.m. Concert + Orchestra (Sanctuary)
- 5:30 p.m. Congregational Concert Reception (Parish Hall)

Monday, February 24

- 10 a.m. Church Growth Committee Mtg (Fanning Rm)
- 6 p.m. First Church Campanelle Rehearsal (Bell Rm)

Tuesday, February 25

- 5:15 p.m. Laundry Love (Wash Land)
- 7 p.m. Deacons Mtg (Zoom)

Thursday, February 27

- 4:30 p.m. Choristers (Music Activities Rm)
- 6 p.m. Bell Choir Rehearsal (Bell Rm)
- 7:15 p.m. First Church Choir (Choir Rm)

Friday, February 28

- 10 a.m. Full Circle Connections (Parlor)
- 6:30 p.m. Family Mardi Gras Night (Parish Hall)

Saturday, March 1

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

Sunday, March 2

- 9 a.m. Informal Worship Service (Parish Hall)
- 10 a.m. Sunday School (Classrooms B, E & F)
Parent Conversations (Adult Library)
- 11 a.m. Worship Service & Holy Communion (Sanctuary)
- 12:15 p.m. Coffee Hour & Coffee Sales (Parish Hall)

Organ + Orchestra

Today at 4 p.m.

Joshua Stafford, organ

Ronald Jenkins,

conductor

Joanna Frankel,

concertmaster

Experience the breathtaking synergy of organ and orchestra in a program of profound beauty and thrilling virtuosity. The program highlights the expressive range of the organ in partnership with a dynamic chamber ensemble.

Free and open to the public.

For event details, please click the QR code below.



Ash Wednesday
Wednesday, March 5

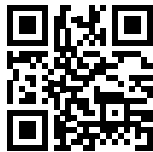
- 12 Noon Service of the Word and Imposition of Ashes
- 7 p.m. Solemn Liturgy and Imposition of Ashes

**Family Mardi Gras Night
Hosted by the
First Church Parent Group
Friday, Feb 28
6:30-8:30 p.m.**

Wear your favorite costume or dress-up outfit! Pizza, punch, and King Cake will be provided. You are welcome to bring snacks/drinks to share.

We will bake and decorate your own King Cake and decorate Mardi Gras masks. There will also be a Costume Parade.

Please click the QR code below to RSVP by Sunday, February 23, for headcount and include information on any food allergies.



**Ukrainian Cultural
Association of Ohio
Pysanka Egg Workshop
Saturday, March 8
10 a.m. - 12 noon
First Congregational Church**

Learn about the ancient art of wax batik on eggs and decorate an egg to take home. \$40 per person. All supplies provided. To register click the QR code below.



Lenten Book Study Groups

In keeping with a cherished First Church tradition, we are planning to offer the Lenten Book Study Groups throughout the upcoming Lenten season. The book that we'll read together as a congregation this year is *Grounded: Finding God in the World – a Spiritual Revolution* by Diana Butler Bass, an award-winning author, preacher, and advocate for progressive Christianity. We have ordered copies of the book for you to pick up in the church office (for \$11) or you may find a copy of the book at the public library or your favorite bookseller.

Once again, the Lenten Book Study Groups will take place in the homes of First Church members who live in different neighborhoods of the Columbus area. In the past, most of our Lenten groups have met two or three times for discussions about the book and for fellowship. Each host determines the day of the week and time of their gatherings.

If you are interested in hosting a Lenten Book Study Group or would like more information, please contact Rev. Joanna by clicking the QR code below.



Fiber Arts Ministry

Calling all knitters, crocheters, quilters and other fiber artists. As we step into a new year, First Congregational Church's Prayer Shawl Ministry is expanding its mission of care. Led by Sarah Giffen this ministry offers a wonderful opportunity to:

- Connect with fellow members who share a passion for fiber arts
- Learn a new craft or share your skills with others
- Create meaningful, handcrafted items that provide comfort and support to others



Transitions Team News

The Transition Team is pleased to announce its two newest members to our group. Susie Loik and Emily Kutschbach-Schmitt will be joining Todd Cunningham, Jackie Dean, Scott Graham, Greg Halbe, Nancy Loy, Allison Lowery Palmer, Paven Peter, Sarah Reed, Josh Stafford and Rev. Becky David. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact one of the team members.

We would also like to announce that we have submitted our church's profile to the Heartland Conference of the United Church of Christ and have posted our search for an Interim Associate Minister who will begin soon after Rev. Joanna Samuelson's term ends June of 2025.

We are excited and looking forward to the next phase of our transitional time under the leadership of Rev. Becky.

New Member Class Saturday March 15 10a.m.- 2 p.m.

With support from our ministers, the Stewardship and Growth Commission will sponsor a new member class on Saturday, March 15, for visitors and others who may have an interest in joining our faith community. The class will run from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the church.

The class is an opportunity to meet our ministers and lay leaders, to learn our church's history, and to see how you might serve and grow spiritually through our activities and programs. The class will include a boxed lunch and tour of our historic building.

Our congregation will accept new members at the 11 a.m. service on Sunday, March 30. You are not required to attend a new member class in order to join, but attendance is encouraged because of the size and complexity of our congregation.

To register for the class, please contact the church office at (614) 228-1741 by Friday, March 7, so we can order the appropriate number of boxed lunches. If you are interested in joining on March 30, but are not able to attend the class, please let the office know that.

Keep in Prayer

Members Lynn Wallich; Nancy Loy; Lisa Fravel-Dean; Mark Brown; Grace Glaros and family; Beverly Halbe; Mike Weddle; Elaine Warren; Margot Connor and John Anderson; Francille Firebaugh; Pauline Fritz; Nancy Burba; Mary Kay Beall Carter and John Carter; Carol Lowy; Clinton Brown; Dan Axt; Martha Huey; and Janice White.

Family and friends Robyn and Mike Petras; our Evensong organist, Jon Tyillian; Marcy Essig's daughter-in-law, Daniella Essig; Joanna Samuelson and family's neighbor, Donna Hammond; Matt Myers' sister, Erin Myers; Michael Russell's friend, Donald Featheroft; BOBS volunteers, John Holly and Sandy Waters-Holly; Shelly Gies' brother, Mike Simms; Victor John's father, Charles John and mother, Mary Jane John; Amy Wagner's friends Bill Kelley and Lee Gatton; Michael Russell's friend, Teresa Elliott; Amanda Butler's aunt, Hattie Coatney; Jennifer Provenzano's friend, Anita Wright; Pat Patterson's son, Jay Patterson, and brother, Dan Stone; Bob and Lorraine Quinichett's daughter, Susan Webster; Melva Fisher's daughter, Susan Wood; Annette McCormick's father, Charles McCormick; Diana and Bob Kutschbach's cousin, Carson Samples; Arevena Nirote's sister and brother-in-law, Marlene and Gary Gallion; and Fran and Bruce Panek's friends, Richard and Beverly Cicenias.

Those who mourn family and friends of Anne Morganstern; and family and friends of Jan Kevan. 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 France, Germany, and Monaco. We also pray for our UCC partner in mission, the Uliga Youth for Christ of the UCC in the Marshall Islands.

CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Interim Senior Minister: Rev. Becky David, M.Div.
Designated Minister: Rev. Joanna Samuelson, M.Div.
Minister of Music: Joshua Stafford, M.M.
Interim Director of Faith Formation: Leslie Fulford
Administrative Manager: Amy Wagner
Communications Manager: Melissa Kulwicki
Office Assistant: Pat Patterson
Business Administrator: Annette McCormick
Maintenance: Mike Sharrock
Custodians: Alexis Wayne, Bill McCabe, Bob O'Brien
Handbell Director: Jennifer Fry
Wedding Coordinators: Amy Wagner, Shelly Gies, Margaret Cipriani, Denise Vogt
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: Martha Worth
Deacons: Allen Baker, Heather Jones, Brian Kemp, Allison Lowery Palmer, Dayna McCrary, Matt Myers, Fran Panek, Gary Seigerst, Thomason Smith

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Chairperson: Frank Cook
Trustees: Matthew Bendick, Todd Jacobson, Victor John, Melody Leidheiser, Janet Miller, Sarah Reed, Judy Smith, (Secretary), Hugh Schultz

CHURCH COUNCIL LEADERSHIP

Moderator: Sarah Reed
Moderator-elect:
Treasurer: Ramona Moenter
Treasurer-elect:
Secretary: Amanda Butler
Secretary-elect:
Nominating Chair: Gregory Halbe

COMMISSIONERS

Church Stewardship and Church Growth: Stephen Sterrett
Church Stewardship and Church Growth-elect: Kathy Reed
Church Vitality: Pat Patterson
Church Vitality-elect:
Communications and Technology Commission: Mike Kennedy
Communications and Technology Commission-elect:
Faith Formation Commission: Cami Curren
Faith Formation Commission-elect: Mariner Taft
House & Grounds: Eric Klintworth
House & Grounds-elect:
Justice & Mercy: James Lowe
Justice & Mercy-elect: Janice Taft
Music, Arts & Heritage: Jim Griffin
Music, Arts & Heritage-elect: Cheryl Hoskinson
Member-at-Large: Martha Wilson
Personnel: Sandra Mathias
Personnel-elect:
Youth Member-at-Large: Sebastian Kulwicki

FIRST CHURCH IS A FAITH COMMUNITY

- † Called together by God, the Creator, Redeemer, 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.

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.

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



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
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