Worship at Nine March 23, 2025 Third Sunday in Lent

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.

Welcome to the season of Lent. As you worship with us during this season, you will notice many things in our service are different than usual. Lent is a wilderness time of sorts that prepares us for Easter Resurrection. Every change we have made is intended to help you drop into that mystery more deeply. Worship is more solemn, more penitent, more quiet. We hope these changes help you find your way inward.

Please use this time for quiet preparation for worship.

GATHERING

Prelude

A period of silence is observed at the ringing of a bell.

*Invocation Barbara Mason

Leader: Your glory and power, O God, surround us in this sacred place.

We lift up our hands and call on your name.

We are your people,

Thirsty for the living water you alone can give. When we consider how you have helped us, Giving us a spring that gushes up to eternal life, We cling to you, singing praises with joyful lips;

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

People: Amen.

Welcome Rev. Becky



PARDON AND ASSURANCE

Rev. Joanna

People: Hidden God,

we bring to this sanctuary
and place on this table,
our burdens and brokenness,
our self-image bruised and hurting,
our fears, shame, doubts and anxieties,
the raw materials we ask You to bless and change,
that in our dark tunnels,
we may begin to see light
and in our desert experiences,
we may find You.

Leader: Our God of living covenant has promised steadfast love for us.

In that love we are forgiven.

In the name of our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Amen.

Passing of the Peace

Rev. Joanna

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

Isaiah 55:1-9 Barbara Mason

Leader: A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah, the fifty-fifth chapter.

Hear, everyone who thirsts;

come to the waters;

and you who have no money,

come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk

without money and without price.

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread

and your earnings for that which does not satisfy?

Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,

and delight yourselves in rich food.

Incline your ear, and come to me;

listen, so that you may live.

I will make with you an everlasting covenant,

my steadfast, sure love for David.

See, I made him a witness to the peoples,

a leader and commander for the peoples.

Now you shall call nations that you do not know,

and nations that do not know you shall run to you,

because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel,

for he has glorified you.

Seek the Lord while he may be found;

call upon him while he is near;

let the wicked forsake their way

and the unrighteous their thoughts;

let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them,

and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts,

nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth,

so are my ways higher than your ways

and my thoughts than your thoughts.

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

People: Thanks be to God.

Luke 13:1-9 Rev. Becky

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

At that very time there were some present who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them-do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did."

Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?' He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

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

People: Thanks be to God.

Reflection Rev. Becky

Responding

Hymn of Preparation
"In the bulb there is a flower"

Promise, Natalie Sleeth, 1986 Natalie Sleeth, 1986



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 Tom Brownfield

Cash and designated gifts go to support the **Coalition of Immokalee Workers** (CIW). The CIW is a worker-based human rights organization internationally recognized for its achievements in fighting human trafficking, sexual violence, modern-day slavery, and other human rights abuses. CIW programs protect tens of thousands of workers harvesting dozens of crops across 23 states and three countries. Thank you for prayerfully considering support for CIW's work.

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.

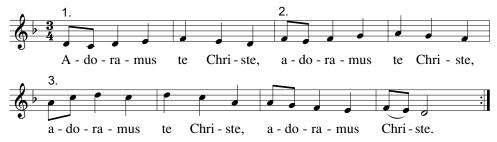
And let the called and redeemed of God say, "Amen."

Communion

Rev. Becky and Rev. Joanna

Communion Hymn "Adoramus te Christe"

Adoramus Te Christe, Marty Haugen, 1984 Antiphon from Good Friday Liturgy



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.

COMMUNITY NOTICES - DEPART TO SERVE

Melissa Kulwicki

Leader Let us depart with a heart to serve.

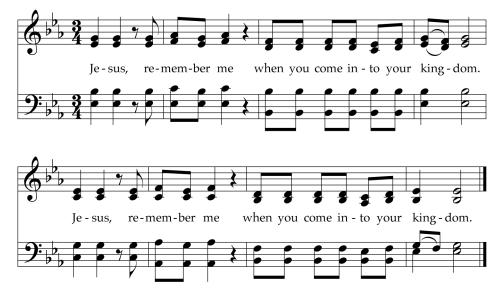
People: Thanks be to God.

*Benediction Rev. Becky

*Closing Hymn

Remember Me, Jacques Berthier, 1981 Taizé Community, 1981

"Jesus, remember me"



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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"Jesus, remember me" Words: Taizé Community, 1981. Music: Jacques Berthier, 1981. © Words and Music 1981 Les Presses de Taizé (admin. GIA Publications, Inc.) All rights reserved.

Leadership in Today's liturgy
The Rev. Becky David, preacher
The Rev. Joanna Samuelson, worship leader
Barbara Mason, liturgist
Melissa Kulwicki, worship leader
Ann Eliot, pianist
Geoff Dean, livestream ministry



March 23, 2025

This Week at First Church

Sunday, March 23

9 a.m. Informal Worship Service &

Holy Communion (Parish Hall)

10 a.m. Sunday School

(Classrooms B, E & F)
Parent Conversations

(Adult Library)

Adult Education (Classroom C)

11 a.m. Worship Service (Sanctuary)

12:15 p.m. BREAD Coffee Hour

(Parish Hall)

4 p.m. Congregational Concert

(Sanctuary)

Monday, March 24

6 p.m. First Church

Campanelle Rehearsal (Bell Rm)

Tuesday, March 25

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

7:15 p.m. Northwest Lenten Study Group

(Home of Sheri Moreen)

Wednesday, March 26

6 p.m. Time Out Dinner

(Molly Woo's Asian Bistro,

Polaris)

Thursday, March 27

8:30 a.m. Clergy Practice Group (Parlor)

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, March 28

10 a.m. Bexley and East Side Lenten

Study Group

(Home of Pauline Fritz)

Westminister-Thurber Lenten Group (8th Fl Community Rm) Full Circle Connections (Parlor)

12 Noon Faith Mission Meal

Prep & Serve (Kitchen)

Sunday, March 30

9 a.m. Informal Worship Service &

Holy Communion (Parish Hall)

10 a.m. Deep Griha Coffee Hour

(Parlor)

Sunday School

(Classrooms B, E & F) Parent Conversations

(Adult Library)

Adult Education (Classroom C)

11 a.m. Worship Service (Sanctuary) 12:15 p.m. Deep Griha Society Fellowship

Luncheon (Parish Hall)

2:15 p.m. Deep Griha Meeting

(Parish Family Rm)

Organ + Piano Today at 4 p.m.

Celebrating the acquisition of our Steinway concert grand piano, Alan Morrison presents a concert of both piano and organ music, including the Rachmaninoff Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini with the Kimball organ taking the place of an orchestra.

B.R.E.A.D Update Annual Nehemiah Action - May 13, 2025

As the days are getting longer and the first signs of new life are emerging, our focus shifts from gathering information to achieving implementation of our solutions in our community. We have been studying the issues this winter, and talked with experts in the field to come up with proven solutions to the problems we are focusing on. The Nehemiah Action is the culmination of our work, and in order for it to be successful and hold our public officials accountable, we need to gather a great show of our people power. On May 13, B.R.E.A.D. will welcome the large crowd at the Celeste Center on the Ohio State Fairgrounds. Doors will open at 6:15 p.m., and the event will start promptly at 6:40 p.m.

As we state our case and ask our politicians to agree with the proven solutions we have previously negotiated with them, we ask for your support as sometimes officials seem not to remember what they had agreed on earlier. This can result in tension, but we expect that, in the end, B.R.E.A.D. rises, and people who were short-changed by landlords or climate change, will receive justice.

We are counting on First Church to participate with at least 150 of our network members and guests. When you receive a phone call from one of us, please respond and add the date to your calendar. And please join us at Coffee hour this Sunday! We will have B.R.E.A.D. t-shirts for sale for \$10.

B.R.E.A.D. rises!

Sunday Morning Book Study
Saying Yes and Saying No: On
Rendering to God and Caesar
With Rev. Dr. Nancy
Livingston
Sunday, March 16 Sunday, April 27
(No Class on Easter)
10 a.m. in Classroom C

Join Rev. Dr. Nancy Livingston for an exploration of Robert McAfee Brown's 1986 book about historic tensions between governments and the church. Beginning with the Barman Declaration, the document the Confessing Church produced in Germany in response to the Nazi take-over in government and the capitulation of the German Evangelical Church. Copies of the book can be found at your local library, bookstore, or on Amazon.

Time Out Wednesday March 26 from 6-7:30 p.m. Molly Woo's at Polaris

Church Vitality Commission invites you, your family, and friends to gather with your church family at Molly Woo's in Polaris. Molly Woo's has wonderful food and atmosphere. This a great opportunity for us to be together for fellowship. Reserve your spot today, we hope you can join us!



You Are Cordially Invited ...

Join the Justice & Mercy Commission of First Congregational Church in welcoming Deep Griha Society Director Ashlesha Onawhale at two area events on Sunday, March 30, and Friday, April 4.

First Church and other UCC congregations in Columbus have appreciated and supported the groundbreaking work of Ashlesha Onawale and her parents, the founders of the Deep Griha Society (DGS), centered in Pune, India. Deep Griha means "house of lamps" in many Indian languages. Through the illuminating paths of education, healthcare, and community building, DGS has, since 1975, equipped individuals in marginalized communities with the skills, confidence, and resources to build brighter futures.

Please RSVP soon to reserve your seats for one or both activities.

Deep Griha Society Fellowship Luncheon Sunday, March 30 12:15 - 2 p.m. First Congregational Church To register click the QR code below. Deep Griha 50th Anniversary Dinner
Friday, April 4
6 – 8 p.m.
First Community North
\$25 Per Person: Reservations Required
To register click the QR code below.





Sign Up for Family Camp at Camp Akita!

With the closing of Templed Hills, we are offering a fun new family weekend at Camp Akita in the beautiful Hocking Hills. Run by First Community UCC, Akita offers a lake, kayaking, giant soap slide, nature hikes, crafts, and an opportunity for meaningful family time with church friends. Family Camp is August 8-10, \$175 per person, children under 3 are free. First Church will pay for kids ages 3-18. Register with your deposit, listing all family members attending, then let Leslie know so we can contribute on our end. Ifulford@first-church.org. Spots are limited for this popular camp, so register by clicking the QR code below soon!



Keep in Prayer

Members James Velo; Tom Worley; Lisa Fravel-Dean; Mark Brown; Grace Glaros and family; Beverly Halbe; Mike Weddle; Margot Connor and John Anderson; Francille Firebaugh; Pauline Fritz; Nancy Burba; John Carter; Carol Lowy; Clinton Brown; Dan Axt; and Janice White.

Family and friends the Speakman family; Michael Russell's friends, Donald Featheroff, Jr. and Ryan Featheroff; Wendy and Robert Reber's sister-in-law, Judy Reber; Tom Kiesel's friend, Carrie; Robyn and Mike Petras; Matt Myers' sister, Erin Myers; 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 friend, Lee Gatton; Michael Russell's friend, Teresa Elliott; Amanda Butler's aunt, Hattie Coatney; 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 Cicenas.

Those who mourn Victor John on the death of his cousin, Devan Endlich; Joel and Sandy Mathias on the death of his sister, Kate Meek; Kathryn Bamberger and Steve Brandehoff on the death of their nephew, Daniel Bamberger; Amy Wagner on the death of her friend, Bill Kelley; John Carter on the death of his wife, Mary Kay Beale Carter.

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 Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. We also pray for our UCC partner in mission at The United Theological College of the West Indies in Jamaica.

We're Looking for Coffee Hour Hosts!

There is a sheet posted on the bulletin board on the first floor near the water fountain where you can sign up to host a coffee hour. We encourage families, friends, committees, and commissions to host a coffee hour, so find a date and sign up! Our Neighborhood Care Circles will continue to host on the first and third Sundays so please help us by signing up to host on one of the other Sundays.

Please talk to Antoinette Koolemans-Beynen or Pat Patterson if you have questions.

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

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 Justice & Mercy: James Lowe 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 Commissioned Minister for Spiritual Formation and Direction: 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-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



