Worship at Nine September 7, 2025 Thirteenth Sunday After Pentecost

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.

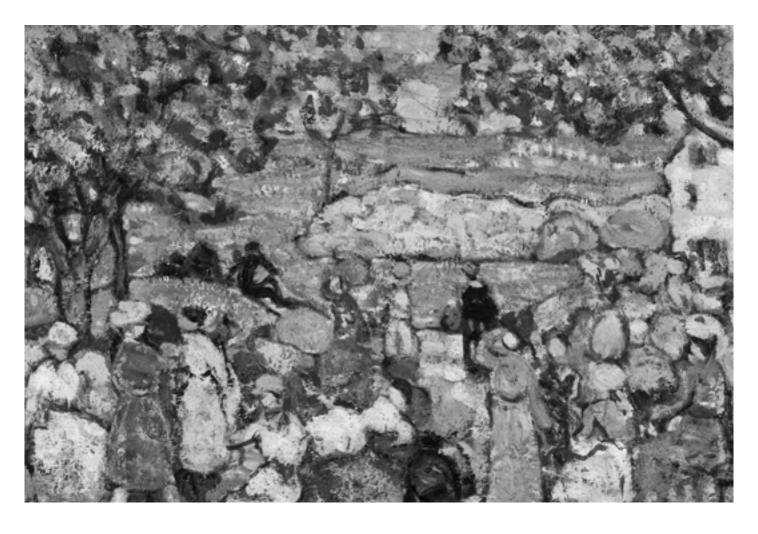
Wherever you are on your faith journey, we invite you to join us in our diverse yet united experience.

GATHERING

Prelude

*Welcome Rev. Becky

*Passing of the Peace Rev. Becky





Opening Prayer Rev. Becky

Leader: Let us pray

Weaver of life, framer of the ages,

We marvel at your artistry and the trust you place in us.

From our first cries to our final breaths, we are your own.

People: Bind us now to each other in ways beyond our choosing,

That your purpose might find fulfillment

In our common life and service,

For we pray in the name of Jesus,

the firstborn of all creation. Amen.

CHILDREN'S TIME Leslie Fulford

During the sermon time, our young children are welcome to participate in "Sunday Stories" with Melissa Kulwicki and Amanda Butler.

LISTENING

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

JEREMIAH 18:1-11 Leslie Fulford

Leader: A reading from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, the eighteenth chapter.

The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: "Come, go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words." So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel. The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as seemed good to him.

Then the word of the Lord came to me: Can I not do with you, O house of Israel, just as this potter has done? says the Lord. Just like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. At one moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, but if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will change my mind about the disaster that I intended to bring on it. And at another moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, but if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will change my mind about the good that I had intended to do to it. Now, therefore, say to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: Thus says the Lord: Look, I am a potter shaping evil against you and devising a plan against you. Turn now, all of you from your evil way, and amend your ways and your doings.

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

People: Thanks be to God.

Luke 14:25-33 Rev. Becky

Leader: A reading from the Gospel according to Luke, the fourteenth chapter.

Now large crowds were traveling with Jesus; and he turned and said to them, "Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions."

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

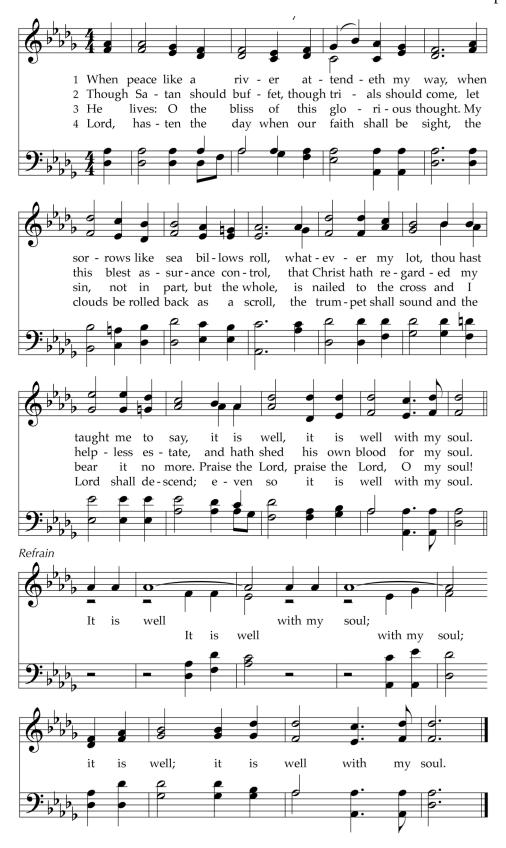
People: Thanks be to God.

Reflection Rev. Becky

RESPONDING

Hymn of Preparation "When peace, like a river" verse 1

Ville du havre, Philip P. Bliss, 1876 Horatio G. Spafford, 1876, alt.



Prayers of the People Rev. Becky

Invitation to Silent Prayer

PASTORAL PRAYER

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.

SUNG RESPONSE "When peace, like a river" verse 4

Ville du havre, Philip P. Bliss, 1876 Horatio G. Spafford, 1876, alt.

THE OFFERTORY

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



Mission Invitation Debi Cunningham

Cash and designated gifts go to support First Church's Good Samaritan Fund. Each month "Good Sam" provides financial help to people in need who come to our church seeking assistance. Every effort is made to meet the unique, emergency needs of these neighbors. Thank you for your generosity.

OFFERTORY MUSIC

Prayer of Dedication Rev. Becky

Leader: Loving God,

We celebrate the abundance in our lives, and that we can share it with the world.

People: In jubilance and grace,

we offer ourselves and all that we are and have

to be your justice and peace

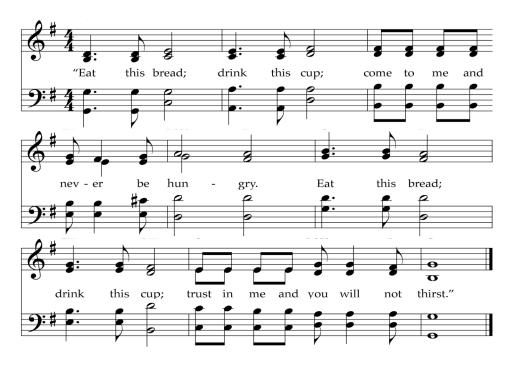
in the midst of all that is unholy, unthinkable, and undeniable.

In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

Communion Rev. Becky

Communion Hymn "Eat this bread"

Berthier, Jacques Berthier, 1984 Robert J. Batastini and the Taizé Community, 1984



Prayer of Thanksgiving

Rev. Becky

People: Generous God,

Thank you for this meal shared in the company of friends.

Having rested and been fed,

May we go from this place committed

To feeding any person who hungers for love,

Offering the same blessings we have received. Amen.

SENDING

STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Steve Sterrett

COMMUNITY NOTICES - DEPART TO SERVE

Melissa Kulwicki

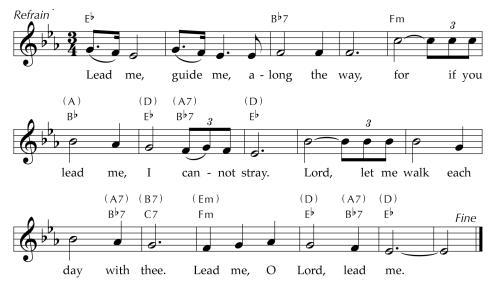
Leader Let us depart with a heart to serve.

People: Thanks be to God.

*Benediction Rev. Becky

*CLOSING HYMN "Lead me, guide me"

Lead Me, Guide Me, Doris Akers, 1953, arr. Richard Smallwood Doris Akers, 1953



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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"Lead me, guide me." Words and music: Doris M. Akers. © 1953 Doris M. Akers, admin by Chappell & Co/Alfred Publishing Co, Inc. All rights reserved.

Leadership in Today's liturgy
The Rev. Becky David, preacher
Leslie Fulford, liturgist and worship leader
Melissa Kulwicki, worship leader
Joshua Stafford, pianist
Geoffrey Dean, livestream ministry

September 7, 2025

This Week at First Church

Sunday, September 7

9 a.m. Worship Service &

Holy Communion (Parish Hall)

10 a.m. Engagement Fair (Parish Hall)

Family Playground Time

(Sam Gordon Playground)

11 a.m. Worship Service (Sanctuary)

12:15 p.m. Engagement Fair (Parish Hall)

Monday, September 8

9:30 a.m. Stewardship & Growth Mtg

(Classroom C & Zoom)

12 Noon Card Care Ministry (Fanning Rm)

6 p.m. First Church Campanelle Rehearsal

(Bell Rm)

7 p.m. Trustees Mtg (Classroom C & Zoom)

Tuesday, September 9

5:30 p.m. Budget & Finance Mtg

(Classroom C & Zoom)

6 p.m. Music Committee Mtg (Parlor)

7 p.m. Executive Committee Mtg

(Classroom C & Zoom)

Communications & Technology Mtg

(Zoom)

Wednesday, September 10

6:30 p.m. Stephen Ministry Class (Fanning Rm)

7 p.m. Book Club (Zoom)

Thursday, September 11

6 p.m. First Church Ringers Rehearsal

(Bell Rm)

7:15 p.m. First Church Choir Rehearsal

(Choir Rm)

Friday, September 12

10 a.m. Full Circle Connections (Parlor)

Sunday, September 14

9 a.m. Worship Service &

Holy Communion (Parish Hall)

10 a.m. Sunday School

(Various Classrooms)

Adult Bible Study (Classroom C)

11 a.m. Worship Service (Sanctuary)

12:15 p.m. Coffee Hour (Parish Hall)

First Church Engagement Fair Today, September 7

FCC Engagement Fair = Helping our members find engagement, service, and friendship opportunities that speak to their hearts here at First Church!

Come learn about all our mission projects, activities, and ways to become engaged and serve here at First Church at our annual Engagement Fair! Join us in Parish Hall right after each worship service for an opportunity to connect with other members as you learn about our activities. Come chat with fellow members, put names to faces, and explore wonderful opportunities for service, engagement, and friendship!

Contact coordinator, Kathy Reed at kbreed2010@gmail.com for more information about this program.

Adult Education Bible Study and Young Peoples Sunday School Sunday, September 14, at 10 a.m

Our Adult Bible Study season begins in Classroom C. The Revs. Margo Connor and Larry Miller will lead this season on the theme of The Parables of Jesus in an Autocratic World.

Also, Sunday School returns for young children and middle school and high school students! Please contact Leslie Fulford at lfulford@first-church.org to register for Sunday School.

A new Youth Group & Bible Study will meet after the 11 a.m. service 2-3 times a month as a mix of Bible study led by Maggie Myers, and youth group activities led by Leslie Fulford and Saturn Cooks. This will replace the 10 a.m. high school Sunday School class. It begins September 14th at 12:15 pm for middle and high school students.

Please register teens and/or parents on the GroupMe app at https://groupme.com/join_group/109929664/42gy7Uqz for safe and easy communication within the group.

Also on September 14, a new season of Parent Conversations begins on the topic of When Kids Ask Hard Questions. Join other parents at 10 a.m. in the Adult Library.

Join in the wonderful educational offering of your choice.

Thank You!

Thank you to all who participated in our teen hygiene collection for Gladden Community House! We collected a huge number of items that will last well into the school year. Thank you to all who donated items or contributed!

Our friends at Gladden were very appreciative.

First Church Book Club James by Percival Everett Wednesday, September 10 7 p.m. on Zoom

Come enjoy lively conversation and get to know other church members at the First Church Book Club on Zoom.

James is a brilliant, action-packed reimagining of Mark Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. Told from the enslaved Jim's point of view, it's both harrowing and ferociously funny. As we see Jim's agency, intelligence and compassion, he emerges as a man of great dignity, altruism, and intelligence. Percival Everett was awarded both the 2025 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the 2024 National Book Award for Fiction for James.

Want to receive book club emails? Please email Kathy Reed at kbreed2010@gmail.com.

Congregational Conversation Sunday, September 21, at 12 p.m.

As we move through our preparation to search and call our next settled pastors, the Transition Team will hold another congregational conversation after the 11am worship service on September 21st. Our time together will focus on being a neighbor.

Lunch will be offered at a suggested donation of \$5.00. Please register on Realm.

Council Minutes Reminder

July's Church Council Minutes are available on Realm. The meeting minutes can be found under Group Resources for "The First Congregational Church" Files. If you need an invite to Realm, please contact the church office at 614-228-1741.

Keep in Prayer

Members Jane Ward; Gretchen Atkinson; Jean Lebold; Stella Braide; Jennifer Fry; Steve Wild; Nancy Livingston; Janice Taft; James Velo; Grace Glaros and family; Beverly Halbe; Mike Weddle; Francille Firebaugh; Nancy Burba; John Carter; Clinton Brown; Dan Axt; and Janice White.

Family and friends Pat Patterson's friend, Tish Mintzer Hopkins; Annette McCormick's family member, Zay Snyder, and friend, Dannie Crace; Leslie Fulford's sister, Kelly Flood, and her father-in-law, Al Fulford; Candy Cummings' friend, Robdonda Hardin; Geoffrey Dean's aunt, Vivian Heaney; Jason Harrell's mother, Sherry Harrell; Rose Kandel's sister, Linde Klein; Melissa Kulwicki's friend, Sandy Bushong; Wendy and Robert Reber's sister-in-law, Judy Reber; Tom Kiesel's friend, Carrie; Robyn and Mike Petras; Matt Myers' sister, Erin Myers; Victor John's father, Charles John and mother, Mary Jane John; Bob and Lorraine Quinichett's daughter, Susan Webster; Diana and Bob Kutschbach's cousin, Carson Samples; and Fran and Bruce Panek's friends, Richard and Beverly Cicenas.

Those who mourn Rev. Becky David and family, on the death of her brother-in-law, Scott Bickford; Janice Cook on the death of her husband, Ron Cook.

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 Benin, the Ivory Coast, and Togo. We also pray for our UCC partner in mission, the Gogoi Mission and Simukai Guara-Guara of the UCC of Mozambique.

BREAD House Meetings are Scheduled

House meetings are designed to discover what issues in our community BREAD should address. We typically get together with a group of 8-10 First Church members and friends and listen to each other.

All issues brought forward are then discussed at the Annual Assembly on November 19, and the most prevalent one will be chosen by vote for further study and possible solutions.

Local government representatives will be consulted and recommendations made. The path leads to the Nehemiah Action in May 2026 where commitments are cemented.

Please join us and make BREAD rise!



Sarah Giffen will lead a luncheon meeting at 12:30 p.m. on September 18 in the Fanning Room; please register through the QR code if you would like to attend.



Todd Jacobson will host a house meeting at 7:00 p.m. in his home in Upper Arlington on September 23; he invites you to register with the QR code.



Steve Sterrett will host a house meeting on September 25 in his home in Clintonville at 7:00 p.m.; to register please use the QR code.



Antoinette Koolemans-Beynen will host the last meeting at 7:00 p.m. at Westminster-Thurber on October 22 and invites anyone to join.

Our Church's Aspirational Budget for 2026 is a Roadmap for the Future

By Steve Sterrett, Commissioner, Stewardship and Growth Commission

Over the course of this year, the Stewardship and Growth Commission has promoted a theology of generosity and a spirit of gratitude. Most recently we've asked church members to share what inspires them and are publishing those stories in "Connections." Members also are writing church-related notes of appreciation that are posted as "Thankful Thursday" messages on our church's social media platforms.

In response to these themes of generosity and inspiration, the commission recommended – and the Church Council agreed – to create this fall an "aspirational budget" for our congregation in 2026. What is an aspirational budget? This is a financial budget that reflects the inspiring goals and dreams of our faith community's lay leaders for ministries, programming, staffing and facilities. This budget complements the work of the Transition Team to identify who we are today and the direction of our faith journey tomorrow.

Over the next six weeks, representatives of our church's commissions will stand before you in worship to describe the ambitious ideas and dreams that they've proposed in this aspirational budget. This will lead into our annual stewardship campaign that kicks off on October 12. I am hopeful the aspirational budget will encourage you to respond with generosity to the stewardship campaign.

I want to emphasize that stewardship is not begging for money. The Stewardship and Growth Commission wants you to find inspiration in the ministries, programs and fellowship of our church and, in response, to give of your time and talent to our faith community. Your treasure will follow. One way to be inspired is to attend our church's second annual Engagement Fair on Sunday, September 7.

The Stewardship and Growth Commission's bold proposal in the aspirational budget is to explore new avenues in 2026 to extend our church's welcome to the rapidly growing number of residents in downtown Columbus. For decades, First Congregational has been a "destination church," drawing members from throughout central Ohio. We now have the opportunity and the responsibility to also be a "neighborhood church." If this appeals to you, join the conversation in our commission meetings or send me an email message at sasterrett@gmail.com.

Legacy Sunday Sunday, September 28 at 11 a.m.

Plans are underway for our Legacy Sunday following one church service at 10 a.m. It will be a potluck and held in the north parking lot, weather permitting. We will have grilled burgers, hot dogs and a veggie burger, with iced tea and water for beverages. All the plates, napkins and utensils will be provided.

Here is what you can bring to share according to your last name:

A-J — Salad

K-R — Dessert

S-Z — Side Dish

You can also bring chairs, blankets, and your favorite outdoor games!

Invitations are being handed out before services that you can RSVP on, or you can register on Realm for this fun time together!

We will be putting together crews to help set up and tear down as well as general clean up. If you would like to help please contact Pat Patterson at ppatterson@first-church.org to sign up!

Church Leadership

Interim Senior Minister: Rev. Becky David, M.Div.

Interim Associate Minister: Rev. jessica young chang, 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, Fubara Braide, Stella Braide, Heather Jones, Justice & Mercy: James Lowe Brian Kemp, Allison Lowery Palmer, Dayna McCrary, Matt Myers, Justice & Mercy-elect: Janice Taft

Fran Panek, Gary Seigerst, Thomason Smith

Transition Team: Jacquelyn Dean and Nancy Loy, co-chairpersons, Music, Arts & Heritage-elect: Cheryl Hoskinson

Todd Cunningham, Rev. Becky David, Scott Graham, Gregory Halbe, Susie Loik, Allison Lowery Palmer, Pavan Peter, Sarah Reed, Personnel: Neal Brower

Joshua Stafford

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: Antoinette Koolemans-Beynen

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:

Music, Arts & Heritage: Jim Griffin

Member-at-Large: Martha Wilson

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



