Worship at Nine September 21, 2025 Fifteenth 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**

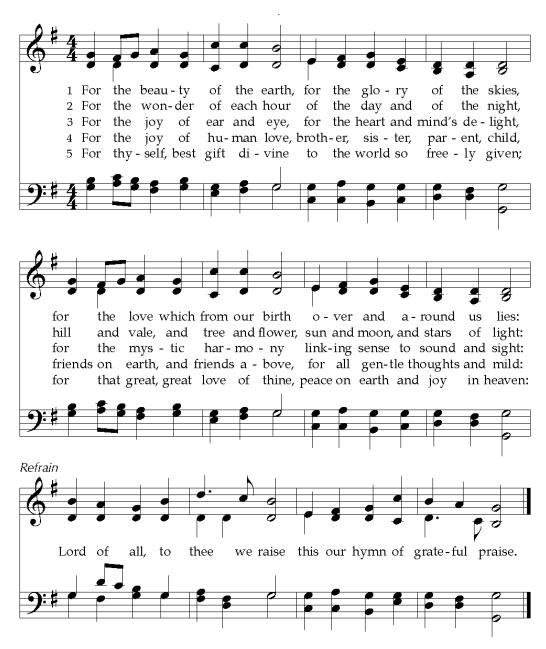
Prelude

\*Welcome Rev. Becky

\*Passing of the Peace Rev. Becky



"Story of Ruth," John August Swanson, 1991



Opening Prayer Rev. Becky

Leader: God, the encourager, God, the compassionate,

God, the merciful, holy, blessed:

People: Disturb us. Rouse us from our sleep.

Lift us into consciousness of your presence.

Change us, move us, mold us for the better;

so that, at the sound of your voice,

at the call of our name,

we will never be the same.

Leader: May our worship do this and so much more,

in the name of Jesus.

People: Amen.

CHILDREN'S TIME Leslie Fulford

During the sermon time, our young children are welcome to participate in "Sunday Stories" with Leslie Fulford and Joshua Stafford.

#### LISTENING

#### SCRIPTURE LESSONS

Jeremiah 8:18-9:1 Kelly Dodd

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

My joy is gone, grief is upon me,

my heart is sick.

Hark, the cry of my poor people

from far and wide in the land:

"Is the Lord not in Zion?

Is her King not in her?"

("Why have they provoked me to anger with their images,

with their foreign idols?")

"The harvest is past, the summer is ended,

and we are not saved."

For the hurt of my poor people I am hurt,

I mourn, and dismay has taken hold of me.

Is there no balm in Gilead?

Is there no physician there?

Why then has the health of my poor people

not been restored?

O that my head were a spring of water,

and my eyes a fountain of tears,

so that I might weep day and night

for the slain of my poor people!

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

People: Thanks be to God.

LUKE 16:1-13 Rev. Becky

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

Jesus said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. So he summoned him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.' Then the manager said to himself, 'What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.' So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' He answered, 'A hundred jugs of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.' Then he asked another, 'And how much do you owe?' He replied, 'A hundred containers of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill and make it eighty.' And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes.

"Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

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

People: Thanks be to God.

Reflection Rev. Becky

#### Responding

Hymn of Preparation "There is a balm in Gilead" verse 1

Balm in Gilead, African American Spiritual African American Spiritual



Prayers of the People

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

"There is a balm in Gilead" verse 2

Balm in Gilead, African American Spiritual African American Spiritual

Rev. Becky

## THE OFFERTORY

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



Mission Invitation Fran Panek

Cash and designated gifts go to support The Largest Table. For more than twelve years, volunteers provide food each Wednesday to individuals and families in the community who are in need. The First Church meal team gathers on the third Wednesday of each month to make and pack up to 100 lunches. Your gifts will help purchase the supplies for our meal team to support this feeding ministry. Thank you for your generosity.

OFFERTORY MUSIC

Prayer of Dedication Rev. Becky

Leader: Creator of all good things,

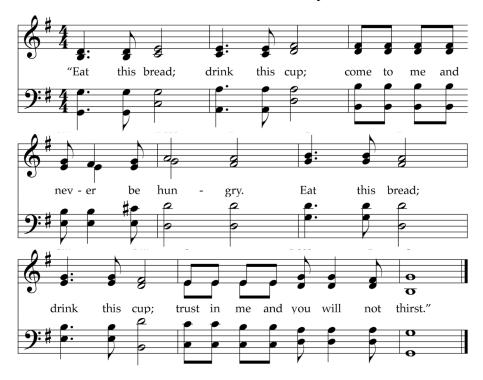
> we give this offering of time, talent, treasure, In gratitude for your generosity and goodness.

Use this offering, and use us, to do your work in this, your world. 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

Leader: Most Delicious Bread,

Once again you have satisfied us

And we are thankful.

People: In the spirit of fullness,

Make us generous with one another. In the hope of all people being fed,

Make us salt and yeast in the world. Amen.

SENDING

STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Jim Lowe

COMMUNITY NOTICES - DEPART TO SERVE

Melissa Kulwicki

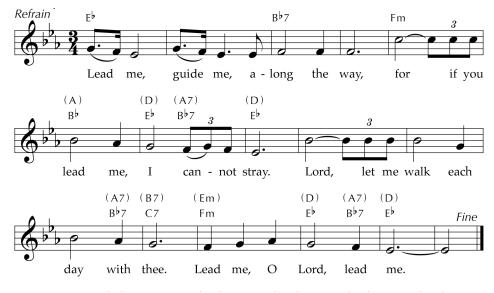
Leader Let us depart with a heart to serve.

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
Kelly Dodd, liturgist
Leslie Fulford, worship leader
Melissa Kulwicki, worship leader
Ann Eliot, pianist
Peter Murray, livestream ministry



**September 21, 2025** 

## This Week at First Church

Sunday, September 21

9 a.m. Worship Service &

Holy Communion (Parish Hall)

10 a.m. Sunday School

(Various Classrooms)

Adult Bible Study (Classroom C)
Parent Coffee & Conversations

(Adult Library)

11 a.m. Worship Service (Sanctuary)12:15 p.m. Congregational Conversation

(Parish Hall)

Youth Bible Study (Youth Rm)

Saturday, September 27

10 a.m. Verger Mtg (Fanning Rm)

Monday, September 22

6 p.m. First Church Campanelle Rehearsal

(Bell Rm)

Tuesday, September 23

6 p.m. Time Out Dinner (101 Craft Kitchen,

Sawmill Rd.)

7 p.m. Deacons' Mtg (Zoom)

BREAD House Mtg (Todd Jacobson's Home)

Wednesday, September 24

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

Thursday, September 25

6 p.m. First Church Ringers Rehearsal

(Bell Rm)

7 p.m. BREAD House Mtg (Steve Sterret's

Home)

7:15 p.m. First Church Choir Rehearsal

(Choir Rm)

Friday, September 26

10 a.m. Full Circle Connections (Parlor)

12 Noon Faith Mission Meal Prep & Serve

(Kitchen)

Saturday, September 27

10 a.m. Verger Mtg (Fanning Rm)

Sunday, September 28 — Legacy Sunday

10 a.m. Worship Service (Sanctuary)

11:15 a.m. Congregational Picnic

(Parish Hall)

4 p.m. Congregational Concert

(Sanctuary)

# Congregational Conversation Today at 12 p.m.

As we go through our preparation to search and call our next settled pastors, the Transition Team will hold a congregational conversation after the 11 a.m. worship service today in Parish Hall. Our time together will focus on being a neighbor. Lunch will be offered at a suggested donation of \$5.

# Adult Education, and Young Peoples Sunday School

Adult Bible Study has begun in Classroom C. The Revs. Margo Connor and Larry Miller are leading the season on the theme of The Parables of Jesus in an Autocratic World.

Sunday School returned for young children. The new Youth Group now meets after the 11 a.m. service. Today the Bible Study with Maggie Myers will be held for middle and high school students.

Please register on the GroupMe app at https://groupme.com/join\_group/109929664/42gy7Uqz for safe and easy communication within the group or contact Leslie Fulford at lfulford@first-church.org to register youth.

Parent Conversations is today in the Adult Library. Join other parents and talk about "When Kids Ask Hard Questions" at 10 a.m. Coffee will be served.

# Time Out Dinner Tuesday, September 23 6 p.m.

Join others for a relaxing dinner at the 101 Craft Kitchen on Sawmill Rd., a place that feels warm and welcoming when you're longing for comfort, yet fresh and exciting when you're craving something new.

Please register on Realm so everyone will have a seat at the table!



# Full Circle Connections Friday, September 26 6 p.m.

Full Circle Connections is meeting in the Parlor. We are continuing to focus on Navigating Change. All are welcome to attend. Please contact Jan Hamilton at hamiltonjan30@yahoo.com to learn more.

# A New Music Season Begins

Starting Sunday, September 28, our first concert of the season will be played by our Minister of Music, Joshua Stafford. He will present a solo organ concert on the Kimball organ featuring Dvorak's 8th Symphony and Liszt's monumental *Ad nos, ad salutarem undam*.

Wednesday, October 1, Music at Midday begins as First Church welcomes Nikita Annenkov on cello and Yihan Zhang on piano.

Upcoming music program information is available at <u>firstchurcharts.org</u>.

# Legacy Sunday Sunday, September 28 11:15 a.m.

There is one more week to sign up for our Legacy Picnic to be held in the north parking lot, weather permitting. We will grill burgers, hot dogs, and veggie burgers, and have iced tea and water for beverages. All the plates, napkins, and utensils will be provided.

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!

Turn in the plate invitation you received or register on Realm for this fun time together!

# Show off your pie baking skills in the Legacy Sunday Pie Contest!

Bring your home-baked creation to Classroom D before the service on September 28 begins. Pies will be judged by a team of expert tasters, led by Rev. Becky. There will be two categories: 1 crust and 2 crust pies. The winning pies will score highest in flavor and appearance of filling and crust. Your recipe must be included with your entry.

The winners receive bragging rights of **BEST PIE BAKER 2025!**Happy baking!

## Keep in Prayer

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

Family and friends Pat Patterson's grandson, Jayden Patterson, and daughter-in-law, Chelsea Powell; 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-inlaw, 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** Emily Wilson on the death of her father, Bud Newcomb; Rev. Becky David and family, on the death of her brother-in-law, Scott Bickford.

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 Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay. We also pray for our UCC partners in mission, the Forum for Development, Culture, and Dialogue in Lebanon.

# Our New Building Manager to Move to New Office Space

The new House and Grounds Superintendent. Kevin Salem, will be moving his office from the Adult Library area to the second floor of the Education Wing into Room G. There is no scheduled date for this move. To reach Kevin by phone his office number is 614-228-1741 extension 122.

# **BREAD House Meetings**

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!



Todd Jacobson will host a house meeting at 7 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 p.m.; to register please use the QR code.



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

## Sacred Earth Eco Info

Do you know how long some materials take to decompose? It will amaze you and we hope to make you think about all the materials still hanging around after we use them.

Paper: 2-6 weeks Plastic Straw: 200 years
Plastic Bottle: 450 year Ziplock Bag: 1,000 years
Gum: 50-1,000 years Styrofoam: **NEVER** 

These times vary dramatically depending on conditions. What's more, many everyday items are made up of more than one material, meaning that a single household object will likely decay at different rates. Please consider this information when buying products.

*Editor's note:* Church Council is creating an aspirational budget for 2026 that reflects the inspiring goals and dreams of our faith community for ministries, programming, staffing, and facilities. During September and October, our commissions and boards will share their bold goals for 2026 in "Connections" and "Depart to Serve."

# Justice and Mercy Commission's Goals and Dreams for 2026

By Jim Lowe, Commissioner of the Justice and Mercy Commission

For many of us, our congregation's commitment to justice and mercy is a key reason we were drawn to First Church. We live this commitment as Jesus depicted it in the parable where he told his disciples that "as you have done for the least of these, you have done for me." One way we regularly seek to fulfill this promise is through the more than 40 organizations that the Justice & Mercy Commission recommends for congregation support in weekly Special Mission offerings. But this is only part of how we live out our faith. The diversity of First Church opportunities to serve God by helping others truly assures that there is something of interest for everyone. In all, there are 10 ministries under the Justice & Mercy umbrella, offering us many pathways to serve: Bethlehem On Broad Street (BOBS); BREAD (Building Responsibility, Equality, and Dignity); Faith Mission; First Serves; Good Samaritan; Largest Table; Laundry Love; Sacred Earth; Unsheltered Ministry; and the Human Rights Committee (new in 2025). Most of these ten ministries are successfully fulfilling their missions, and are not planning alterations of their programs in 2026. But we've identified opportunities in four areas that offer us new ways to "do for the least of these." Our proposals will help by:

- Restoring the stability and security of more of our neighbors, by raising the level of support the Good Samaritan program offers, to meet the utility and basic needs of 25 households monthly. We also plan to resume offering a higher number of grocery gift cards up to 50 households per month.
- Expanding our Laundry Love volunteer corps and financial help to improve the health and dignity of our neighbors with a second laundromat location on the North or South Sides. This will double our service to an average of 50 households monthly. We also plan to offer COTA passes for those who need them, and coloring books and comic books to help entertain children while parents are doing laundry.
- Strengthening our longtime connection to the Deep Griha Society, and committing financial support to sponsor 10 children for their program in Pune, India. Sponsorship will cover food, medical care, counseling, education needs, clothing, recreational activities, and cultural events.
- Funding and organizing a First Church Human Rights Committee, to initiate, plan, become a partner in, and carry out activities and programs to promote and protect human rights in our community and elsewhere.

# Gladden Lecture Saturday, October 4 2 p.m.

Popular theologian, author and podcaster Pete Enns will deliver the annual Gladden Lecture in Parish Hall. His lecture will be "The Case for Social Justice." Enns is known for his interpretations of the Bible that reconcile biblical stories with science and modern biblical scholarship, and speak to faith concerns. He is author of *Curveball: When Your Faith Takes Turns You Never Saw Coming* and co-host of the podcast "The Bible For Normal People."

The lecture is free and open to the public. Advance registration for the lecture on October 4 is requested, but not required. Click the QR code to register. Enns will preach at First Community Church on Sunday, October 5.

### 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 Building and Grounds Superintendent: Kevin Salem 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



