Worship at Nine December 14, 2025 Third Sunday of Advent

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

* Welcome Rev. jess



Mary's Song, Lauren Wright, 2016

"Come, thou long expected Jesus"

Charles Wesley, 1744



*Opening Prayer

Rev. jess

Leader: God of the Quickening,

Even as we move slowly, slowly through this season of almost-not-quite,

We wait for the coming of the newborn, the vulnerable life

That will teach us true vulnerability, and profound love.

People: Be with us, in us, and among us in worship today.

Light your flame in our hearts, put your words in our mouths,

and move through us,

That we might love you more fully and perfectly

as we practice loving one another. Amen.

*Passing of the Peace

Rev. jess

CHILDREN'S TIME / LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

Rev. jess and CP Chang

Speaker 1: The light glowing from our Advent wreath is burning brighter.

This radiance warms our hearts and fills us with joy!

The Lord has done great things for us. Let us rejoice.

Speaker 2: "May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.

Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing,

shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves" (Psalm 126:5-6).

The first three candles are lit.

Speaker 1: Light three candles, see them glow,

Brightly, so that all may know.

How three candles show the way,

Making our darkness bright as God's day.

Speaker 2:Those who go out weeping,

bearing the seed for sowing,

shall come home with shouts of joy,

carrying their sheaves.

All: Come, Lord Jesus, come.

During the sermon time, our young children are welcome to participate in "Sunday Stories."

LISTENING

THE FIRST READING

"How the Light Comes" by Jan Richardson

Jill Hultin

I cannot tell you

how the light comes.

What I do know

is that it is more ancient

than imagining.

That it travels

across an astounding expanse

to reach us.

That it loves

searching out

what is hidden,

what is lost,

what is forgotten

or in peril

or in pain.

That it has a fondness for the body, for finding its way toward flesh for tracing the edges of form, for shining forth through the eye, the hand, the heart.

I cannot tell you how the light comes, but that it does. That it will. That it works its way into the deepest dark that enfolds you, though it may seem long ages in coming or arrive in a shape you did not foresee.

And so
may we this day
turn ourselves toward it.
May we lift our faces
to let it find us.
May we bend our bodies
to follow the arc it makes.
May we open
and open more
and open still
to the blessed light
that comes.

THE GOSPSEL READING

Luke 1:41-55

Rev. jess

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

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant.

Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed,

for the Mighty One has done great things for me,

and holy is his name;

indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him

from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly;

he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.

He has come to the aid of his child Israel,

in remembrance of his mercy,

according to the promise he made to our ancestors,

to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

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

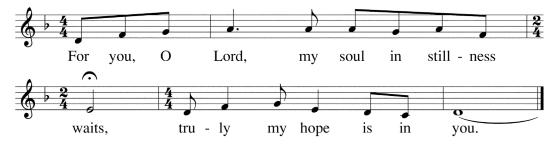
People: Thanks be to God.

Reflection Rev. jess

RESPONDING

Hymn of Preparation

"My soul in stillness waits" refrain twice



Pastoral Prayer Sung Response

Rev. jess

"My soul in stillness waits" refrain twice

THE OFFERTORY

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



Mission Invitation Donna Vogt

Today's cash and designated gifts will go toward Christmas gift cards for the parents and staff of **Childcare Wonderland**. Located across the street from First Church, Childcare Wonderland is a federally subsidized bilingual childcare center and preschool program whose mission is to prepare children of low-income families for elementary school. They provide English and Spanish-speaking caregivers for children ages 6 weeks - 6 years. Children enjoy breakfast, lunch, and snacks, reading, art, music and more. Approximately 90% of the families are on Title 20, meaning they receive subsidized childcare, depending upon their income. Please give generously.

Offertory Music David Hogrefe

Prayer of Dedication Rev. jess

All: God of the open hand, we thank you for your

continued blessing of us, our hearts, and our lives. Take this, our offering of time, talent, and treasure,

and use it, and use us,

to manifest Your Kin-dom, on Earth, as it is in Heaven. Amen.

Communion Rev. jess

"And Now We Eat Together" by Mary Luti

Leader: And now we eat together

while waiting for the Day. And now we drink together while working for the Day.

People: And now we hope together

while Justice makes a Way, returning to this table 'til Heaven comes to stay.

Leader: And now, good Jesus, lead us

and live in us we pray, be food and daily courage along the Mercy Way.

People: And we will keep on loving

no matter what they say, today and still tomorrow, 'til Heaven comes to stay.

COMMUNION PRAYERS AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Rev. jess

Leader: We remember when Jesus gathered...

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.

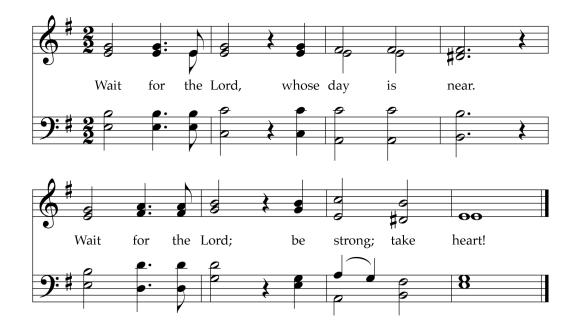
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,

for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

SHARING THE ELEMENTS

Communion Hymn "Wait for the Lord"

Wait for the Lord, Jacques Berthier, 1984 Taizé Community, 1984



Prayer of Thanksgiving

Rev. jess

People: Merciful one, we rejoice that even as we wait for your arrival, we are able to be nourished by your presence in this meal. May this morsel and drop nourish our bodies, and may your love be planted in each of us, that we are moved and motivated to say Yes to you when you arrive. Come, Lord Jesus, Come. Amen.

SENDING

COMMUNITY NOTICES - DEPART TO SERVE

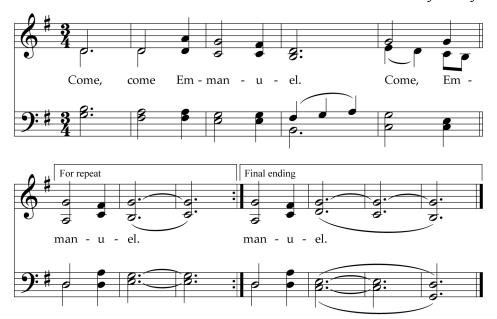
Melissa Kulwicki

Leader: Let us depart with a heart to serve.

People: Thanks be to God.

*Benediction Rev. jess

"Come, come Emmanuel"



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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"Wait for the Lord." Words: Communaute de Taize, 1991. Music: Jacques Berthier, 1984. ©1991 Les Presses de Taize, GIA Publications, Inc., agent. All rights reserved.

"Come, come Emmanuel" Words and music by James J. Chepponis, 1995. © 1995 GIA Publications, Inc. All rights reserved.

Leadership in Today's liturgy
The Rev. jessica young chang, preacher
Jill Hulton, liturgist
Leslie Fulford, worship leader
Melissa Kulwicki, worship leader
David Hogrefe, pianist
Geoffrey Dean, livestream ministry



December 14, 2025

This Week at First Church

Sunday, December 14

9 a.m. Worship Service & Holy Communion

(Parish Hall)

10 a.m. First Serves (Classroom D)

Godly Play (Classroom B)

Adult Bible Study (Classroom C)

11 a.m. Worship Service (Sanctuary) 12:15 p.m. Coffee Hour (Parish Hall)

4 p.m. Christmas Festival of Lessons and Carols

(Sanctuary)

6 p.m. Pageant Dinner & Rehearsal

(Fanning Rm)

Tuesday, December 16

5:15 p.m. Laundry Love (Wash Land)

7 p.m. Church Council Mtg

(Classroom C & Zoom)

Wednesday, December 17

10 a.m. The Largest Table (Kitchen)

6:30 p.m. Stephen Ministry Supervision Mtg

(Stephen Ministry Office)

Thursday, December 18

7:15 p.m. First Church Choir Rehearsal (Choir Rm)

Saturday, December 20

11 a.m. BOBS Mtg (Zoom)

Sunday, December 21

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 & Sales (Parish Hall)

BOBS Workday (Parish Hall)

12:30 p.m. Confirmation Class (Parish Hall)

6 p.m. Pageant Dinner & Rehearsal

(Fanning Rm)

December's First Serves Today at 10 a.m.

Help spread the spirit of giving this season by wrapping the donations of Christmas gifts for the children, and gift cards for the parents and staff of Childcare Wonderland. We will deliver the gifts earlier this year as Childcare Wonderland will be closed Christmas week.

Childcare Wonderland is a federally subsidized preschool program whose mission is to prepare children of lowincome families for elementary school.

Adult Bible Study Today at 10 a.m.

Please join Tom Brownfield as he continues his two part series "What St. Paul means by Salvation".

On Sunday, December 21, Tom will discuss "Christmas: Letting the Light Break Forth."

This is the last study of 2025. Offerings for Adult Bible Study in 2026 will be announced at a later date.

Christmas Lessons and Carols Today at 4 p.m.

Join us as we usher in the Christmas season with this beautiful candlelight festival featuring the First Church Choir, Ringers, Brass, and two organs. May the music of the choirs, the songs of the congregation, the prayers, and lessons read aloud bring you great joy and peace, which passes all human understanding.

Lessons and Carols is a free program and open to the public with a freewill offering.

BOBS Workday Sunday, December 21 12:15 p.m.

Join Santa's helpers in Parish Hall get Bethlehem On Broad Street (BOBS) ready for Christmas! Jobs will be assembling toiletry kits, sorting children's gifts, and many other needs. Stay for an hour or the afternoon... many hands make light work!

Lunch will be provided courtesy of the Gleeful Neighborhood Group and BOBS. Please register on Realm!

Volunteer opportunities before Christmas are scheduled from December 19 through the 23, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Santa's Workshop

Volunteers sort and bag toiletries, move and set-up tables, chairs, and decorations, and help with other prep and set-up tasks.

Santa's Kitchen

Volunteers assist the kitchen manager by carving turkeys and hams, storing desserts, and helping with other preparations for Christmas Dinner.

To sign up for any of these opportunities visit the BOBS website at bethlehemonbroadstreet.org/volunteer-form/.

HoneyBaked Fundraiser

Let HoneyBaked do the cooking for your Christmas feasts! Purchase a gift card online to use for your goodies or gift it to loved ones. This is a great opportunity to gift food or gift cards to Bethlehem on Broad Street. First Church receives 20% of your order that goes toward the youth mission trip.

Shop at https://www.honeybaked.com/fundraising/First Congregational Church Youth Mission Trip.

Please contact Leslie Fulford at lfulford@first-church.org for more information. Thank you and please share our link with friends.

Longest Night Service Monday, December 22 5 p.m.

If you are experiencing any measure of sadness, grief, loneliness, alienation, or feeling like you don't know what to do with yourself or with these feelings, you are invited to join your First Congregational Church UCC Community for a Longest Night service in the Washington Gladden Chapel.

Sometimes known as Blue Christmas, this service is an opportunity for us to express our lament, to grieve who and what we have lost, and to dwell together in contemplative reflection and ritual. We will share poetry, scripture, song, a ritual of prayer, and the Lord's Supper together. All are welcome.

Keep in Prayer

Members Jane Weddle; Nancy Livingston; Gerry Worth; Al Waddell; Pat Liebchen; Jane Ward; Gretchen Atkinson; Stella Braide; James Velo; Grace Glaros and family; Beverly Halbe; Francille Firebaugh; Nancy Burba; John Carter; Clinton Brown; and Dan Axt.

Family and friends Shelly Gies' father, Robert Simms and brother, Mike Simms; Susie Loik's friends, Julia and Jim Perry; Kevin Salem's uncle, Harold Allen; Wendy and Robert Reber's life-long friend, David Roberts and family; Candy Cummings' friend, Robdonda Hardin; Geoffrey Dean's aunt, Vivian Heaney; Jason Harrell's mother, Sherry Harrell; Tom Kiesel's friend, Carrie; Matt Myers' sister, Erin Myers; Victor John's father, Charles John and mother, Mary Jane John; Diana and Bob Kutschbach's cousin, Carson Samples.

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 Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. We also pray for our UCC partner in mission the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan.

First Church Book Club Wednesday, January 7 7 p.m.

Enjoy lively conversation with other church members at the First Church Book Club. Our selection is *The Plot Against America* by Philip Roth.

This is alternative history at its literary best. Aviation hero, isolationist, and Hitler supporter Charles Lindbergh defeats Franklin Roosevelt in the 1940 presidential election. Lindbergh negotiates a cordial accord with Adolf Hitler, accepts his conquest of Europe and anti-Semitic policies, igniting a storm of fear for Jewish families across America. Through the eyes of a child, we see how ordinary adults and children can have their lives affected, influenced and turned upside-down by the decisions of those with power and authority.

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

Advent Services

Third Sunday of Advent, December 14

Worship at 9 & 11 a.m

Christmas Festival of Lessons and Carols at 4 p.m.

Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 21

Worship at 9 & 11 a.m

Christmas Eve

Wednesday, December 24

Family Worship Service at 3 p.m.

Service and Pageant of the Nativity at 7:30 p.m.

Festive Prelude at 10:30 p.m.

Candlelight Communion Service at 11 p.m.

Christmas

Thursday, December 25

Bethlehem on Broad Street

Doors open at 8:30 a.m.

Worship Service at 10 a.m.

Traditional Sit-Down Meal from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Fiber Arts Announcement

The December 18 meeting has been cancelled. They will resume in February. For more information about our Fiber Arts Care Group please contact Sarah Giffen at sgiffenknit@gmail.com.

Sacred Earth Eco Tip

DID YOU KNOW ...

Recycling creates 5,000 jobs in central Ohio?

Paper cups and plates like those used at coffee hour can be recycled (yes, even after being used!)?

Paper napkins and towels cannot be recycled but can be composted?

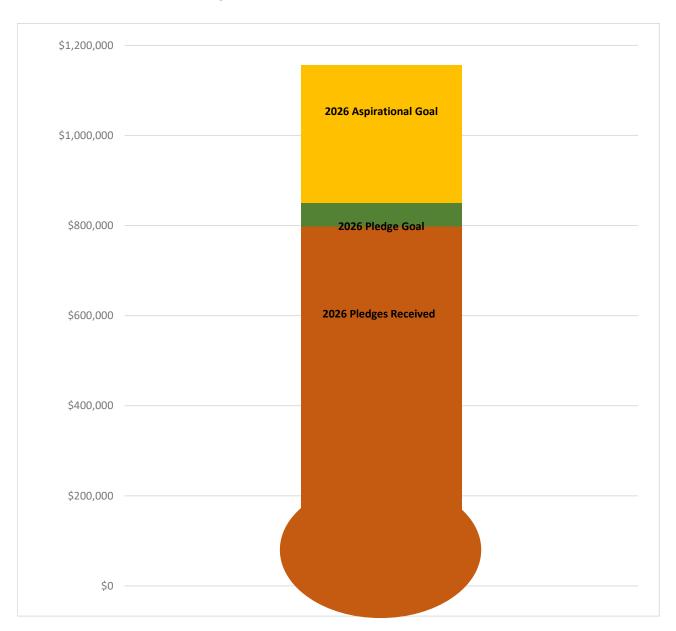
Please help keep 5,000 people employed by putting your recyclables in the blue recycling bins at First Church.

Commmissioner Reminder

The deadline for submitting your commission reports for inclusion in the 2025 Annual Report is Wednesday, January 7, 2026. All files should be sent to Amy Wagner at awagner@first-church.org.

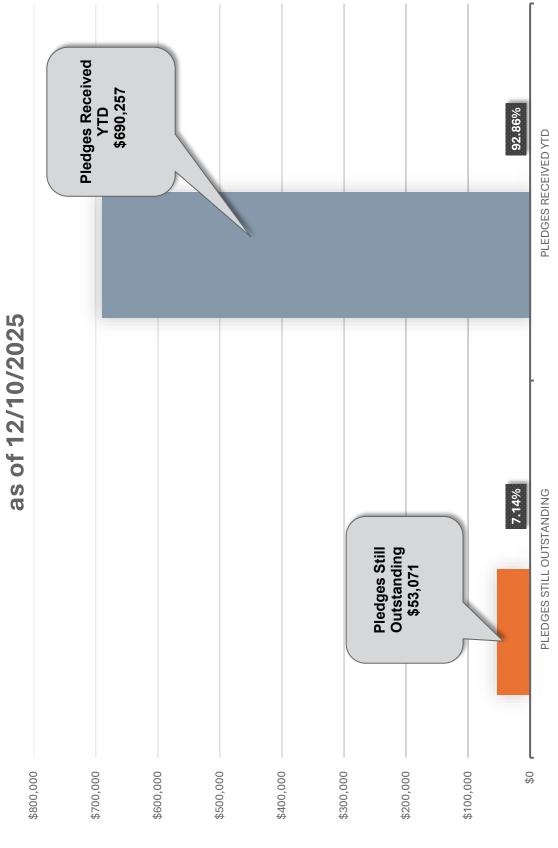
| 2026 Pledges Received | 2025 Pledged Budget | 2026 Pledge Goal | 2026 Aspirational Goal | 2025 Comparison | 2026 Goal | Aspirational Goal |
|--------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| 798,107 | 742,253 | 850,000 | 1,156,258 | 108% | 94% | 69% |

This chart represents how we are making progress on our 2026 stewardship campaign. We surpased the 2025 pledge campaign! Currently we are only \$51,893 from hitting our goal of \$850,000 for our 2026 campaign.



21 Days left to pay on your pledge for 2025. Make sure you have First Congregational Church on your to-do list!





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 Training Coordinator:

Wendy Kennedy

Stephen Leader and Stephen Ministry Referrals Coordinator:

Stephen Leader and Stephen Ministry Communications, Media Faith Formation Commission: Cami Curren

and IT Coordinator: Annette McCormick

Senior Deacon: Martha Worth

Deacons: Allen Baker, Fubara Braide, Stella Braide, Heather Jones, House & Grounds-elect: Brian Kemp, Allison Lowery, Dayna McCrary, Matt Myers, Fran Panek, Gary Seigerst, Thomason Smith

Transition Team: Jacquelyn Dean and Nancy Loy, co-chairpersons, Music, Arts & Heritage: Jim Griffin Todd Cunningham, Rev. Becky David, Scott Graham, Gregory Halbe, Susie Loik, Allison Lowery, Pavan Peter, Sarah Reed, Joshua Member-at-Large: Martha Wilson 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: Nathaniel

Powell

Faith Formation Commission-elect: Mariner Taft

House & Grounds: Eric Klintworth

Justice & Mercy: James Lowe Justice & Mercy-elect: Janice Taft

Music, Arts & Heritage-elect: Cheryl Hoskinson

Personnel: Neal Brower 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

