



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

WORSHIP AT NOON
FEBRUARY 18, 2026
ASH WEDNESDAY

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

ENTER TO WORSHIP

*At the tone of the bell, the ministers enter.
A period of silence is observed.*

INVOCATION

Rev. Becky David

Leader: Let us pray.
Holy, holy, holy God
We place ourselves in your presence; we rest in the promise of your grace.
Our minds and our spirits are cluttered with many thoughts and feelings that threaten to pull our attention away from you.
Let us unclench our fists and release these things:

**People: We release all that we have done today—whether for good or for ill.
We release all that we feel like we should have done today, but did not do.
We release all that we need to do tomorrow.
We release our fear.
We release our anxiety.
We release our impatience.
We release our pride.
All of the thoughts, all of the feelings that pull us away from you, O God, we release.**

[silence]

Leader: Fill us now with the joy and the peace of your deep, abiding presence.
We offer all of ourselves to you, our One God, Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 6:1-6,16-21

Rev. jessica young chang

Leader: A reading from the Gospel according to Mark, the sixth chapter.

Jesus said, "Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

"So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

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

People: Thanks be to God.

REFLECTION

Rev. young chang

CONFESSION

Rev. David

Leader: O God of life, we confess the ways we turn away from the fullness of life that you offer.
[silence] Let us pray:

People: Create in me a clean heart, O God.

Leader: God of love, we confess the hatred we hold in our hearts.
[silence] Let us pray:

People: Create in me a clean heart, O God.

Leader: God of compassion, we confess our indifference.
[silence] Let us pray:

People: Create in me a clean heart, O God.

Leader: God of justice, we confess that our lives are linked to oppressive systems.
[silence] Let us pray:

People: Create in me a clean heart, O God.

Leader: God of peace, we confess the violent movements of our hearts,
the violent realities of our world.
[silence] Let us pray:

People: Create in me a clean heart, O God.

Leader: Holy God, we confess our sins to you.
[silence] Let us pray:

People: Create in me a clean heart, O God.

Let your soul receive this rest: neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, neither heights nor depths—nor anything else in all creation—can separate us from the love of God, that is given to us through Christ Jesus. Breathe in deeply the forgiveness of our God.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Rev. young chang and Rev. David

After the ministers impose ashes on one another, those who wish may come forward to receive the mark of the cross on the forehead or palm of the hand.

If you do not wish to receive the ashes, remain in prayer.

Those who are worshipping with us online are invited to make the mark of the cross on your forehead or palm. When the ashes are imposed, you are invited to say, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." After all who wish to receive ashes have received them, the prayers of confession are concluded with these words:

MEDITATION

Rev. David

Blessing of Ashes by Jan Richardson

All those days you felt like dust, like dirt,
as if all you had to do was turn your face toward the wind
and be scattered to the four corners
or swept away by the smallest breath as insubstantial—

Did you not know what the Holy One can do with dust?

This is the day we freely say we are scorched.

This is the hour we are marked by what has made it through the burning.

This is the moment we ask for the blessing that lives within the ancient ashes,
that makes its home inside the soil of this sacred earth.

So let us be marked not for sorrow.

And let us be marked not for shame.

Let us be marked not for false humility
or for thinking we are less than we are

but for claiming what God can do

within the dust, within the dirt, within the stuff of which the world is made,

and the stars that blaze in our bones,

and the galaxies that spiral inside the smudge we bear.

Silence

Leader: Holy One, at the threshold of Lenten time,
we remember who You are, and who you have called us to be.

**People: God of Love,
We remember that You are Love, that you created us from Love.**

Leader: We lift up those among us whose hearts are broken,
who are lonely, afraid, grieving and hurting.
Pour Your love on us, that we may know Your love.

People: God in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

**People: God of Justice,
We remember that justice is Your love in action
and comes from You.**

Leader: We lift up those among us groaning and struggling
under the weight of injustice,
who are alienated, dehumanized and dispossessed.
Pour out Your justice on us, that we may know Your justice.

People: God in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

**People: God of Joy,
We remember that You have created so much beauty,
so much delight in Your world, and to ignore it is to ignore You.**

Leader: We lift up those among us who are angry, who are sad,
those for whom the color has gone out of life
and joy feels extinct.
Pour out Your joy on us, that we may know Your joy.

People: God in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Leader: God of Peace,
We acknowledge that in this world, peace within us,
peace between us, and peace throughout creation
is Your vision for life.
We lift up those among us
whose bodies, hearts, homes, and streets
are broken and torn apart by the absence of peace.
Pour out Your peace on us, that we may know Your peace.

People: God in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Leader: Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on us this day.
May we know love.
May we know justice.
May we know joy.
May we know peace.
This day and every day, in the name of Christ we pray,

People: Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**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.**

BENEDICTION

Rev. young chang

LEAVE IN SILENCE

LEADERSHIP IN TODAY'S LITURGY
The Rev. jessica young chang, *preacher*
The Rev. Becky David, *worship leader*

Your offering today will go to support the **Good Samaritan Ministry** of First Church. For decades now, our Good Samaritan Fund has been providing financial assistance to our neighbors who are struggling to make ends meet and are unable to pay their utility bills. Every effort is made to meet the unique needs of each person seeking financial assistance. The need, here, in the Columbus area continues to grow as the number of those seeking financial assistance climbs each month. You may also give online following the QR code below. Thank you for generous support of this vital First Church ministry to our wider community.

To give online, please scan this QR code.



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
Commissioned Minister for Spiritual Formation and Direction: Jacquelyn Dean
Stephen Leader and Stephen Ministry Training Coordinator: Wendy Kennedy
Stephen Leader and Stephen Ministry Referrals Coordinator: Susie Loik
Stephen Leader and Stephen Ministry Communications, Media and IT Coordinator: Annette McCormick
Senior Deacon: Martha Worth
Deacons: Allen Baker, Fubara Braide, Stella Braide, Heather Jones, Brian Kemp, Allison Lowery, Dayna McCrary, Matt Myers, Fran Panek, Gary Seigerst, Thomason Smith
Transition Team: Jacquelyn Dean and Nancy Loy, co-chairpersons, Todd Cunningham, Rev. Becky David, Scott Graham, Gregory Halbe, Susie Loik, Allison Lowery, Pavan Peter, Sarah Reed, 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

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: 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: 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

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
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