

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

WORSHIP AT ELEVEN  
MARCH 29, 2026  
PALM & PASSION SUNDAY

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.*

VOLUNTARY

*Valet will ich dir geben*

J.S. Bach, c. 1715

\*ENTER TO WORSHIP

Melissa Kulwicki

Leader: Children of God, Rejoice!  
Sing out in celebration, God's people!  
Your King is coming to you, humble,  
riding on a donkey, on a donkey's foal.

**People: Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest!**  
**Blessed is the one who comes in the Lord's name.**  
**Glory to God! Hosanna!**

Leader: Let us pray.  
Eternal God, whose whisper silences the shouts of the mighty,  
Quiet within us every voice but your own.  
Speak to us now through the mysteries of this most holy week,  
That by the power of your Holy Spirit  
We may receive grace to show forth Christ's love in lives committed to your service.

**People: Amen.**

\*MOTET

Thomas Weelkes, ca. 1608

"Hosanna to the Son of David"

Matthew 21:9

Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed be the King that cometh in the Name of the Lord. Hosanna.  
Thou that sittest in the highest heavens. Hosanna in excelsis Deo.

Leader: A reading from the gospel according to Matthew, the twenty-first chapter.

When Jesus and his disciples had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

"Tell the daughter of Zion,  
Look, your king is coming to you,  
humble, and mounted on a donkey,  
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

"Hosanna to the Son of David!  
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

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

**People: Thanks be to God.**

\*BLESSING OF THE PALMS *written by Rev. Caela Simmons*

Rev. jessica young chang

Leader: Bless these parade palms, O God of Celebration.  
May they remind us of the simple joys of living.  
May we remember the excitement that comes with following Christ.  
Bless these protest palms, O God of Justice.  
May they remind us that Empire is not a thing of the past.  
May they make us bold and brave to stand up against injustice.  
Bless these funeral palms, O God of Comfort.  
May they remind us of the road that lies ahead.  
May they encourage us in times of grief and pain.

**People: We give you thanks for the parade, the protest, the processional.  
Guide our steps through this holiest of weeks  
as we cry out together "Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna!" Amen.**

\*INVITATION TO THE PROCESSION

Leader: Hosanna to the Son of David!

Rev. young chang

**People: Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the Highest!**

*Children, youth, and adults are invited to join in the palm procession as it passes,  
placing palms on the cross at the chancel steps.*

\*PROCESSIONAL HYMN

*Valet will ich dir geben*, Melchior Teschner, 1614

“All glory, laud, and honor”

Theodulph of Orleans, c. 820; trans. John Mason Neale, 1851

*Refrain*

All glo - ry, laud, and hon - or to thee, Re-deem-er, King,

to whom the lips of chil - dren made sweet ho-san-nas ring!

1 Thou art the King of Is - ra - el, thou Da - vid's roy - al Son,  
2 The peo - ple of the He - brews with palms be - fore thee went;  
3 To thee, be - fore thy pas - sion, they sang their hymns of praise;  
4 Thou didst ac - cept their prais - es; ac - cept the prayers we bring,

who in the Lord's name com - est, the King and bless - ed One.  
our praise and prayers and an - thems be - fore thee we pre - sent.  
to thee, now high ex - alt - ed, our mel - o - dy we raise.  
who in all good de - light - est, thou good and gra-cious King!

*to Refrain*

\*HYMN

Truro, Musica Sacra, c. 1778

“Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates”

Georg Weissel, 1642, tr. Catherine Winkworth

1 Lift up your heads, ye might - y gates; be - hold the  
 2 Fling wide the por - tals of your heart; make it a  
 3 Re - deem - er, come! I o - pen wide my heart to

King of glo - ry waits; the King of kings is  
 tem - ple, set a - part from earth - ly use for  
 thee; here, Lord, a - bide. Let me thy in - ner

draw - ing near; the Sav - ior of the world is here.  
 heaven's em - ploy, a - dorned with prayer and love and joy.  
 pres - ence feel; thy grace and love in me re - veal.

\*WELCOME AND PASSING OF THE PEACE

Rev. David

Leader: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

**People: And also with you.**

Leader: Let us greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace.

*\* When you return to your seat, please find the blue Welcome notebook at the end of the pew, sign it and pass it on to your neighbor so we many greet one another by name.*

THE HEBREW SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Ms. Kulwicki

Leader: A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah, the fiftieth chapter.

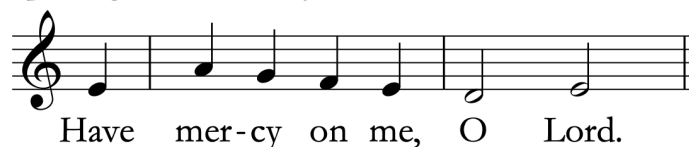
The Lord God has given me  
 the tongue of a teacher,  
 that I may know how to sustain  
 the weary with a word.  
 Morning by morning he wakens—  
 wakens my ear  
 to listen as those who are taught.  
 The Lord God has opened my ear,

and I was not rebellious,  
 I did not turn backward.  
 I gave my back to those who struck me,  
 and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;  
 I did not hide my face  
 from insult and spitting.  
 The Lord God helps me;  
 therefore I have not been disgraced;  
 therefore I have set my face like flint,  
 and I know that I shall not be put to shame;  
 he who vindicates me is near.  
 Who will contend with me?  
 Let us stand up together.  
 Who are my adversaries?  
 Let them confront me.  
 It is the Lord God who helps me;  
 who will declare me guilty?  
 Leader: The Word of God for the people of God.  
**People: Thanks be to God.**

THE PSALTER

Psalm 31:9-16

*The Choir introduces the Antiphon, after which the People join in singing the Antiphon, repeating as indicated after the Choir chants the verses.*



Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am in trouble;  
 my eye is consumed with sorrow, and also my throat and my belly.  
 For my life is wasted with grief, and my years with sighing;  
 my strength fails me because of affliction, and my bones are consumed.  
 I have become a reproach to all my enemies and even to my neighbors,  
 a dismay to those of my acquaintance;  
 when they see me in the street they avoid me.  
 I am forgotten like a dead man, out of mind;  
 I am as useless as a broken pot.

*Antiphon*

For I have heard the whispering of the crowd; fear is all around;  
 they put their heads together against me; they plot to take my life.  
 But as for me, I have trusted in you, O Lord.  
 I have said, "You are my God.  
 My times are in your hand;  
 rescue me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me.  
 Make your face to shine upon your servant,  
 and in your loving-kindness save me."

*Antiphon*

Leader: A reading from the letter of Paul to the Phillipians, the second chapter.

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

who, though he was in the form of God,

did not regard equality with God

as something to be exploited,

but emptied himself,

taking the form of a slave,

being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

he humbled himself

and became obedient to the point of death--

even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him

and gave him the name

that is above every name,

so that at the name of Jesus

every knee should bend,

in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

and every tongue should confess

that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father.

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

**People: Thanks be to God.**

\*HYMN

*The King's Majesty*, Graham George, 1939

"Ride on! Ride on in majesty!"

Henry Hart Milman, 1827



1 Ride on! ride on in ma - jes - ty! Hark! all the  
 2 Ride on! ride on in ma - jes - ty! In low - ly  
 3 Ride on! ride on in ma - jes - ty! The an - gel  
 4 Ride on! ride on in ma - jes - ty! Thy last and  
 5 Ride on! ride on in ma - jes - ty! In low - ly



1 tribes ho - san - na cry; thy hum - ble beast pur - sues his  
 2 pomp ride on to die; O Christ, thy tri - umphs now be -  
 3 ar - mies of the sky look down with sad and won - dering  
 4 fierc - est strife is nigh; the Fa - ther on his sap - phire  
 5 pomp ride on to die; bow thy meek head to mor - tal



1 road with palms and scat - tered gar - ments strowed.  
 2 gin o'er cap - tive death and con - quered sin.  
 3 eyes to see the ap - proach - ing sac - ri - fice.  
 4 throne ex - pects his own a - noint - ed Son.  
 5 pain, then take, O God, thy power, and reign.

*Please be seated for the first portion of the Passion.*

### THE PASSION OF OUR LORD ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

MATTHEW 27:11-54

Rev. David and Rev. young chang

Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You say so." But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?" But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas. So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him." Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" All of them said, "Let him be crucified!" Then he asked, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!"

So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." Then the people as a whole answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" So he

released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

*The congregation is invited to stand.*

As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him. Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."

Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, 'I am God's Son.'" The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way.

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "This man is calling for Elijah." At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last.

*The congregation is invited to sit.*

At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

SILENCE

SERMON

Rev. David

SILENCE

Leader: Today we have cheered you on as our champion and hailed you as our hero.

**People: Forgive us tomorrow when our enthusiasm wanes.**

Leader: Today we have entrusted you to rescue us from our pitiful circumstances.

**People: Forgive us on Tuesday when we decide we can take care of ourselves.**

Leader: Today we have made you the centerpiece of our very existence.

**People: Forgive us on Wednesday when we forget to remember who you are.**

Leader: Today we have called out to you loudly by name.

**People: Forgive us on Thursday when we pretend that we've never met you.**

Leader: Today we have stared at you with the star struck eyes of fans and groupies.

**People: Forgive us on Friday when we avert our eyes  
because it's too painful to see you on the cross.**

Leader: Today we have expressed our unsuppressed hopefulness in the future you have in store for us.

**People: Forgive us on Saturday when we believe all is lost.**

Leader: Today we have been boldly certain of the earthly ways you will redeem us.

**People: Restore us on Sunday when we are startled and awed by your rising.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Rev. young chang

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:*



MISSION INVITATION

Rev. young chang

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 ANTHEM

Johann Crüger, 1640, arr. John Ferguson, 1991

“Ah, holy Jesus”

Johann Heermann, 1630; trans. Robert Seymour Bridges, 1899, alt.

Ah, holy Jesus, how hast thou offended?  
By foes derided, by thine own rejected.  
Who was the guilty?  
Who brought this upon thee?  
Alas, my treason, Jesus, hath undone thee.  
‘Twas I, Lord Jesus, ‘twas I.

CLOSING PRAYER

Rev. David

Leader: Loving God, we give you thanks for the great acts of love by which you have redeemed us through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. As we prepare for the solemn events of Holy Week, we ask for your guidance and strength to follow Jesus’ example of humility, service, and love. Help us to be faithful witnesses to your love and grace in our daily lives.

**People: May our hearts be filled with joy and hope as we reflect on the sacrifice of Jesus, and may we be ever mindful of his teachings and his unwavering love for us.**

Leader: We pray this through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**People: Amen.**

\*CLOSING HYMN

“O sacred head, now wounded”

*Passion Chorale*, Hans Leo Hassler, 1601

Latin, 12th or 13th cent.; trans. James Waddell Alexander, 1830

1 O sa - cred head, now wound-ed, with grief and shame weighed down;  
2 What thou, my Lord, hast suf - fered was all for sin - ners' gain:  
3 What lan-guage shall I bor - row to thank thee, dear-est friend,

now scorn-ful - ly sur - round - ed with thorns, thine on - ly crown;  
mine, mine was the trans - gres - sion, but thine the dead-ly pain.  
for this thy dy - ing sor - row, thy pit - y with-out end?

O sa - cred head, what glo - ry, what bliss till now was thine!  
Lo, here I fall, my Sav - ior! 'Tis I de - serve thy place;  
O make me thine for - ev - er; and should I faint - ing be,

Yet, though de - spised and gor - y, I joy to call thee mine.  
look on me with thy fa - vor, and grant to me thy grace.  
Lord, let me nev - er, nev - er out - live my love to thee.

*There is no postlude on this Holy Day. Please depart in silence.*

*If you have not done so, you are invited to add your palms to the Palm Cross on the chancel steps.*

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*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.*

† WE WELCOME KARL PEDERSEN, principal violist with the Columbus Symphony Orchestra, as our guest instrumentalist this morning.

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“Ride on! Ride on in majesty!” Music: Graham George, 1939. ©1941; ren 1969, H.W. Gray Company, Inc., a division of Belwin Mills Corporation. All rights reserved.

LEADERSHIP IN TODAY’S LITURGY

The Rev. Becky David, *preacher*

The Rev. jessica young chang, *worship leader*

Melissa Kulwicki, *liturgist*

Jason Harrell and Sebastian Kulwicki, *vergers*

Jack Drake, *crucifer*

The First Church Choir

Joshua Stafford, *organist and director*

Karl Pedersen, *viola*

Mike Kennedy, *livestream ministry*

EXPERIENCE HOLY WEEK AND EASTER AT FIRST CHURCH

**Maundy Thursday, April 2**

Liturgy of the Lord’s Supper, 7 p.m.

**Good Friday, April 3**

Tenebrae Service, 7 p.m.

**Holy Saturday, April 4**

Easter Vigil, 7 p.m.

With choir, brass, and percussion.

Prosecco reception to follow.

**Easter Sunday, April 5**

Sunrise Service in The Washington Gladden Social Justice Park, 7 a.m.

Easter Egg Hunt on the Playground, 10 a.m.

Festival Worship and Holy Communion in the Sanctuary, 11 a.m.

With The First Church Choir, two organs, brass, and percussion



*Enter to Worship*  
**Depart to Serve**

March 29, 2026

## **This Week at First Church**

### **Sunday, March 29 — Palm Sunday**

- 9 a.m.      Worship Service and  
              Holy Communion (Parish Hall)
- 10 a.m.      Sunday School Classes  
              (Various Classrooms)  
              Adult Bible Study (Classroom C)  
              First Serves (Classroom D)
- 11 a.m.      Worship Service (Sanctuary)
- 12:15 p.m.   Coffee Hour (Parish Hall)  
              Lenten Small Group (Parlor)
- 3 p.m.      Solidarity Vigil and  
              Community Meal  
              (Abubakar Asiddiq Islamic Ctr)

### **Monday, March 30**

- 6 p.m.      First Church Campanelle Practice  
              (Bell Rm)
- 7 p.m.      Holy Week Deacon Rehearsal (Sanctuary)

### **Tuesday, March 31**

- 5 p.m.      Laundry Love (Wash Land)
- 6 p.m.      Lenten Small Group  
              (Hank and Martha Wilson's home)
- 7 p.m.      Lenten Labyrinth Walk (Parish Hall)

### **Wednesday, April 1**

- 7:30 a.m.    Wonderfully Made: LGBTQ+ Devotional  
              (Zoom)
- 6:30 p.m.    Stephen Ministers Monthly Mtg  
              (SM Office)
- 7 p.m.      Book Club (Zoom)

### **Thursday, April 2 — Maundy Thursday**

- 7 p.m.      Liturgy of the Lord's Supper (Sanctuary)

### **Friday, April 3 — Good Friday**

- 7 p.m.      Tenebrae Service (Sanctuary)

### **Saturday, April 4 — Holy Saturday**

- 7 p.m.      Easter Vigil (Sanctuary)

### **Sunday, April 5 — Easter Sunday**

- 7 a.m.      Sunrise Service (Washington  
              Gladden Social Justice Park)
- 10 a.m.      Easter Egg Hunt and Donut Hour  
              Sam Gordon Playground &  
              Education Wing)
- 11 a.m.      Festival Worship and  
              Holy Communion (Sanctuary)

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## **Adult Bible Study**

### **Today at 10 a.m. in Classroom C**

Rev. Margot Connor and Rev. Larry Miller continue the series on the Psalms. They follow the lectionary, and introduce classical means of interpreting psalms, psalm categories and types, and then look at the meaning of the individual psalm of the day. Everyone is welcome to join in this study.

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## **First Serves for March**

### **Today at 10 a.m. in Classroom D**

First Serves has collected items for hygiene care kits for women at CHOICES, a program of Lutheran Social Services. CHOICES has served and helped protect Central Ohio women facing domestic violence since 1977.

We collected full size hygiene products for women entering the shelter. Donated items will be put into the kits today. Please come share your generosity of time, talent, and treasure with the women at CHOICES.

## **Solidarity Vigil / Community Meal Abubakar Asiddiq Islamic Center Today, March 29 at 3 p.m.**

As the day-to-day struggle of being Somali-American in our community has recently escalated into violence and hate crimes, local leaders, people of faith and good will, and neighbors must act! As such, you are invited to a Solidarity Vigil and Community Meal hosted by Abubakar Asiddiq Islamic Center and co-sponsored by Faith in Public Life and Ohio Interfaith Collective.

Black and Brown immigrants are being targeted by cruelty and bigotry both from the current administration and those emboldened by them. We can do something about it! We can come together and proclaim that we belong together, that we are stronger together. That is what we'll do at Abubakar Asiddiq Islamic Center.

Ramadan in the Muslim tradition and Lent in the Christian tradition both began the same week. In both cases, they are seasons of fasting with a focus on charity, justice, and moral realignment. As we move through these weeks of spiritual practice, let us look ahead to Palm Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week, and the Sunday after Eid. On that day, we'll gather for prayer and proclamation, for community, and for sharing a meal generously provided by the Somali-American community that we are called to love as our neighbors.

Register using the QR Code to attend this meaningful event. Please contact Rev. Dan Clark (he/him) at [dclark@faithinpubliclife.org](mailto:dclark@faithinpubliclife.org) for more information.



## **First Church Reads: 2026 Lenten Reflection *How to Know a Person***

We are close to ending our season of Lenten Reflections and our small-group conversations centering on *How to Know a Person: The Art of Seeing Others and Being Deeply Seen* by David Brooks.

Andrew Welsh-Huggins on Sunday (3/29) at 12:30 p.m. in the Adult Library at First Church.

Rev. Jess Young Chang on Wednesdays (4/1, 4/8) at 7:30 a.m. on Zoom.

Susie Loik on Tuesday (4/7) at 10 a.m. in her home.

Martha & Hank Wilson on Tuesday (3/31) at 6:30 p.m. in their home.

Jackie Dean on Thursday (4/9) at 1 p.m. in the Parish Family Room at First Church.

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## **Lenten Labyrinth Walk Parish Hall March 31 at 6:30 p.m.**

Walking the labyrinth is a ritual form that is thousands of years old and is often seen as a metaphor for our spiritual journey. This walking meditation is an opportunity for you to discover the Divine as you experience the transformative energy within its twists and turns.

You are invited to join Jackie Dean in Parish Hall to learn a brief history of and then to walk the labyrinth as part of your contemplative experience of Holy Week. Finger labyrinths will be available for anyone who may have mobility issues.

## **Book Club** **Wednesday, April 1** **7 p.m. on Zoom**

Come enjoy lively conversation at the First Church Book Club when they discuss *Wandering Stars* by Tommy Orange.

*Wandering Stars* spans more than 150 years, from the horrors of the 1864 Sand Creek Massacre in Colorado to the pain inflicted at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania to the aftermath of a 2018 mass shooting in Oakland, California. What does it mean to be Native American in the U.S., to survive cultural erasure? How do generations find ways through the long-term effects of massacre, dislocation, and forced assimilation?

Please call Kathy Reed, 614-442-7742 with any questions, to receive book club emails, or for the Zoom link.

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## **A Women's Retreat** **April 18 at 9 a.m.**

Save the date for this Women's Retreat to be led by Jackie Dean. It will be held at the Westminster-Thurber Heritage Pointe Party Room. More information and registration will be available soon.

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## **Visitation Ministry Training** **April 19 at 12:30 p.m.**

Congregational Care means taking care of our church community, and it depends on YOU! Please join the team that shows others you care. Visitation Ministry is a wonderful way to share Christ's love and while caring for one another. Join Rev. Jess and members of the Congregational Care Ministries team leaders for the required training and explore what Visitation Ministry is and how to join!

**Registration is open on Realm and closes Wednesday, April 1.** Individuals can also stop by the church office and sign up. Please note: A background check on people who visit congregants is required.

## **Youth Mission Trip** **Washington, DC** **June 13-18**

Youth ages 14 through young adult are invited on our urban mission trip to serve, learn how to help others, and be agents of change in our own communities. The program will be led by the Youth Service Opportunity Program (YSOP).

If you are interested in attending as a youth or chaperone please register using the QR Code. We are able to take up to 15 people so please register this week! If you would like to help plan the trip please email Leslie Fulford at [lfulford@first-church.org](mailto:lfulford@first-church.org). Learn more about the YSOP mission trip at <https://www.ysop.org/programs>.



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## **Sacred Earth Eco Tip**

Have you started your Spring Cleaning yet? Here's an effective, eco-friendly cleaning solution for kitchen countertops, bathroom surfaces & appliances.

Ingredients are 1 cup white vinegar; 1 cup water; 1 sliced lemon or 10 drops of lemon essential oil; 1 tablespoon Castile soap (optional for extra grease-cutting power). Combine all ingredients in a reusable spray bottle. Let it sit for 24 hours if using lemon slices to infuse the vinegar.

Vinegar cuts through grease and kills bacteria, while lemon and essential oils add antibacterial properties and a fresh scent. **Avoid using vinegar on granite or marble** as it can etch stone, use Castile soap & water instead.

Source: Sustainable Spring Cleaning Tips & Products for 2025.

## Summer Camp Registration Time

There are many ways to engage children, youth, adults & families in the faith, fellowship and outdoor fun of summer camps, and First Church makes it easy with early registrations and camper scholarships for youth. Here are some to consider:

First Church Singing & Ringing Day Camp will be offered June 8-12, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. Children entering grades 2-8 are invited to explore choral singing, handbells, Choir Chimes, and the two magnificent First Church organs led by talented music professionals in this fun weeklong day camp at First Church. No musical experience or faith background required—just bring your curiosity and enthusiasm! Financial assistance is available to anyone in need.

Camp Christian UCC Camps offers *In the Wilderness* as this summer's theme for Heartland UCC camps at Camp Christian in Marysville. There are many programs to choose from for youth and adults of all ages.

Social Justice Day Camp at Broad Street Presbyterian Church, for rising K-5th graders runs June 1- 4, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Youth explore multiple justice themes in child-appropriate ways through hands-on learning, with plenty of play and fun.

Family Camp at Camp Akita is August 14-16. Family Camp is a weekend of outdoor family fun in the Hocking Hills, full of swimming, kayaking, giant soap slides, basketball, nature hikes, singing, crafts, vespers and great food & accommodations (really!). Akita staff even provides nighttime childcare so parents and older kids can stay out late after little ones turn in. This camp is run by First Community UCC.

First Church is happy to provide camper scholarships for any First Church children and youth who want to attend a church related camp, thanks to the generosity of the late Alma Keeler. Scholarships are for 50% of the camp cost on the early registration fee, after the \$75 deposit. To request the Alma Keeler scholarship, there is the "Campership Request" form to be completed and submitted to Annette McCormick by April 14 at 5 p.m.

Contact Leslie Fulford at [lfulford@first-church.org](mailto:lfulford@first-church.org) for more information and to request the Campership Request form. Links to more detailed information is available in Connections.

## Keep in Prayer

**Members** Charles Wagner; Jane Weddle; Jane Ward; Grace Glaros and family; Beverly Halbe; Francille Firebaugh; Nancy Burba; John Carter; Clinton Brown; Dan Axt.

**Family and friends** Malini Peter's friend, Usha Rangarajan; Susan Brooks' friends, Marti and Ned Timmons; Dayna McCrary's sister, Rosalind Murray; Dakota Saunders' friend, Trisha; Susie Loik's daughter, Kelly and son, Laeric; Vicki Lyden's daughter, Hilary; LJ Cooks' sister, Gretchen Weller-Cooks' sister-in-law, and Alexi and Saturn Cooks' aunt, La Vonja Dowdell; Janice Taft's cousin, Teri Williams; Shelly Gies' father, Robert Simms and brother, Mike Simms; Kevin Salem's uncle, Harold Allen; Wendy and Robert Reber's life-long friend, David Roberts and family; Geoffrey Dean's aunt, Vivian Heaney; Jason Harrell's mother, Sherry Harrell; Tom Kiesel's friend, Carrie; Matt Myers' sister, Erin Myers; and Diana and Bob Kutschbach's cousin, Carson Samples.

**Those who mourn** Allen Baker on the death of his husband, Al Waddell; Wayne Henry and Sean Dingus on the death of Wayne's father, Wayne Henry; Nathaniel Powell and Brian Pousak on the death of Brian's grandmother, Barbara Pousak; Dayna McCrary and family on the death of her mother-in-law, Patricia McCrary.

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 the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia. We also pray for our UCC partner in mission, the Peace Bible Schools in El Salvador.

# Holy Week and Easter at First Church

April 2 | 7 p.m. | Maundy Thursday  
Liturgy of the Lord's Supper in the Sanctuary

April 3 | 7 p.m. | Good Friday  
Tenebrae Service in the Sanctuary

April 4 | 7 p.m. | Saturday  
Easter Vigil in the Sanctuary

April 5 | Easter Sunday  
7 a.m. | Sunrise Service in The Washington Gladden  
Social Justice Park

10 a.m. | Easter Egg Hunt with Donut Hour in the  
Playground area and Education Wing

11 a.m. | Festival Worship and Holy Communion  
in the Sanctuary

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## Justice & Mercy Missions

Upcoming missions will be:

March 29 - Good Samaritan Fund

April 5 - UCC Ohio Great Hour of Sharing

April 12 - The Largest Table

April 19 - Ohio Wildlife Center

April 26 - Moms Demand Action

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## Call for Columbus Pride Volunteers

Volunteers are needed to help plan our First Church participation in the Columbus Pride March this June. This event allows us to extend our welcome to all LGBTQ+ to the broader Columbus community. Please contact Wayne Henry at [wayne@43homes.com](mailto:wayne@43homes.com) or use the QR Code to register and get involved with this great opportunity to showcase our open and affirming community.



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## Let's have Sacred Conversations

In the past two years, I have shared the goals for this transitional time at First Church – to become healthy and whole in our relationships and ministry together, and to be ready to fully welcome new spiritual leaders into our church. Recently, based on a conversation about welcome and inclusion at the March 8th Congregational Conversation, the Transition Team is focusing on how we, as individuals and as a congregation, live with justice and mercy for all.

The Open and Affirming Statement of First Congregational Church begins, “We welcome and affirm all. We believe we are all created in God’s image and called to love our neighbors as Jesus loves us.” What does that mean and what does it look like? Now is the time to ask these and other hard questions and do what can be uncomfortable self-reflective work. Now is a time to share experiences that serve as invitations for connection. I believe we love each other not through abstract ideas, but through our connections of lived experiences. I believe this is another way we become healthy and prepare for next ministries.

Please join me, Rev. Becky, and the Transition Team for Sacred Conversations about what it means to be open and affirming at First Congregational Church. We will meet after 11am worship on April 26, May 17, May 31, and June 14. A light lunch will be included.

Sarah Reed, Moderator

## Information for our faith community from the 2026 Stewardship Campaign

*By Steve Sterrett, commissioner*

*Stewardship and Growth Commission*

In this time of ministerial transition, we should look forward to new church leadership, but we also should pay attention to whom we are as a congregation and to plan for the future. Demographic information from the 2026 stewardship campaign offers important insight into the composition of our church membership.

First, let me express gratitude for the great response to the recently completed stewardship campaign. We raised \$797,247 in pledges for 2026 from 189 households. The pledge total is a 7.4% increase over the pledges for 2025. I thank all of our members for their pledges.

Printed below is demographic data on the pledges for 2026 by the various age groups within our congregation.

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Number in group</b>	<b>Pledge totals</b>	<b>Average pledge</b>
49 & under	13	\$ 32,150	\$ 2,473
50 to 59	30	\$163,500	\$ 5,450
60 to 69	34	\$106,820	\$ 3,142
70 to 79	55	\$214,947	\$ 3,908
80+	43	\$251,950	\$ 5,859
<u>No age listed</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>\$ 27,880</u>	<u>\$ 1,991</u>
Grand total	189	\$797,247	\$ 4,218

By comparison, we have demographic data from our congregation's 2003 stewardship campaign when 238 households pledged a total of \$464,365, averaging \$1,951 per giving unit. Here is the number of households by age group:

39 & under	44
40 to 49	53
50 to 59	36
60 to 69	29
70 to 79	41
80+	35

Comparing 2026 to 2003, the data clearly underscores the aging of our church's membership. In 2026, more than half the pledging households were 70 years of age and older. The households that averaged the highest pledges were 80 years of age and older.

While I am extremely grateful that our members who are older than 70 are committed to our church and most likely have the resources to pledge at the highest levels, I also recognize they are not likely to be with us in 10 to 20 years.

Our faith community's future requires that we continue to attract new members and welcome them into our congregation. If we expect to attract new members, however, we must be open to examining and, as necessary, changing the way we do "church."

I suspect our church will always be characterized by a commitment to social justice and to music and other liturgical arts, but the programs and activities that fulfill these commitments may need to evolve to meet the expectations younger generations. I suggest we also may need to more actively engage our members in small groups, service projects, social activities, and spiritual direction that build the sense of "community" that is lacking in our secular culture.

One example might be a larger investment of resources in our 9 a.m. worship service that is reaching a growing segment of our congregation. Perhaps, we also should grow support for congregational care, particularly ministries that reach older members who may be less able to attend worship services in person and ministries that enable members to know one another through small group activities and service projects.

As the commissioner for stewardship and growth, I don't have the prescription for how our church should evolve over the next decade. As a congregation, we do have the human and capital resources to figure that out. But we must be open to change. That will determine whether we are a thriving faith community in 10 years or a dwindling congregation desperately trying to maintain an historic cathedral building with inadequate resources.

## 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:** Dayna McCrary

**Deacons:** Fubara Braide, Stella Braide, Camilla Curren, Sandra Geronimo, Jason Harrell, Brian Kemp, Allison Lowery, Barbara Mason, Fran Panek, Gary Seigerst, Thomason Smith, Martha Worth

**Transition Team:** Jacquelyn Dean and Nancy Loy, co-chairpersons, Todd Cunningham, Rev. Becky David, Gregory Halbe, Susie Loik, Allison Lowery, Pavan Peter, Sarah Reed, Joshua Stafford

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Chairperson:** Frank Cook

**Trustees:** Matthew Bendick, David Hogrefe, Victor John, Melody Leidheiser (Secretary), Janet Miller, Sarah Reed, Hugh Schultz, Charlie Weaver

### 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:** Antoinette Koolemans-Beynen

**Church Vitality-elect:**

**Communications and Technology Commission:** Mike Kennedy

**Communications and Technology Commission-elect:** Nathaniel Powell

**Faith Formation Commission:** Mariner Taft

**Faith Formation Commission-elect:**

**House & Grounds:** Eric Klintworth

**House & Grounds-elect:** Fran Panek

**Justice & Mercy:** James Lowe

**Justice & Mercy-elect:**

**Music, Arts & Heritage:** Jim Griffin

**Music, Arts & Heritage-elect:** Cheryl Hoskinson

**Member-at-Large:** Martha Wilson

**Personnel:** Neal Brower

**Personnel-elect:** Chris Brooks

**Youth Member-at-Large:**

## 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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