



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

WORSHIP AT NINE
JULY 12, 2026
SEVENTH 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

RINGING OF THE BELL

*GATHERING SONG

"Morning has broken" verse 1

Bunessan, Gaelic melody
Eleanor Farjeon, 1931, alt.

1 Morn-ing has bro - ken like the first morn - ing; black-bird has
2 Sweet the rain's new fall sun - lit from heav - en, like the first
3 Mine is the sun - light! Mine is the morn - ing, born of the
spo - ken like the first bird. Praise for the sing - ing! Praise for the
dew - fall on the first grass. Praise for the sweet-ness of the wet
one light E - den saw play! Praise with e - la - tion; praise ev - ery
morn - ing! Praise for them, spring - ing fresh from the Word!
gar - den, sprung in com - plete - ness where God's feet pass.
morn - ing, God's re - cre - a - tion of the new day!

*INVOCATION

Julia Myers

Leader: Let us pray:

People: **Creator God,**

**You opened Your mouth and uttered a word
and creation sprang forth in abundance.**

**Let us open our mouths in praise,
that we may bear fruit in every season
and be satisfied by Your goodness,
for You, O God, are the source of all growth,
Your grace abounds forever. Amen.**

*WELCOME AND PASSING OF THE PEACE

Rev. Bill

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

CHILDREN'S HYMN

"God is so good"

God is So Good, Traditional African
Paul Makai, tr. Marilyn Foulkes, ca. 1970, rev.

1. God is so good, God is so good,
2. God cares for me, God cares for me,
3. God's all I need, God's all I need,

God is so good, God's so good to me.
God cares for me, God's so good to me.
God's all I need, God's so good to me.

LISTENING

THE FIRST READING

Romans 8:1-11

Julia Myers

Leader: A reading from the Letter of Paul to the Romans, the eighth chapter.

There is no longer any condemnation, however, for those who are in Christ Jesus. The law of the Spirit—the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed you from the law of sin and death. What the Law was powerless to do because human nature made it so weak, God did—by sending the Only Begotten in the likeness of sinful flesh as a sin offering, thereby condemning sin in the flesh. In this way, the just demands of the Law could be fulfilled in us, who live not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Those who live according to the flesh have their mind set on the things of the flesh; those who live by the Spirit, on things of the Spirit.

The mind of the flesh is death, but that of the Spirit is life and peace. The mind of the flesh stands in opposition to God; it is not subject to God's law—indeed, it cannot be, since those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Those who do not have the Spirit of Christ do not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, then though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit lives because of righteousness. If the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then the One who raised Christ from the dead will also bring your mortal bodies to life through the Spirit dwelling in you.

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

People: Thanks be to God.

THE PSALTER

Psalm 65:9–14

The congregation joins in singing the entirety of the Psalm.

Each measure of the chant corresponds to one half-verse of the Psalm, with notes changing at the | symbol.

9. You visit the earth and water it abundantly;
you make it very | plenteous;
the river of God is full of | water.

10. You prepare the | grain,
for so you provide for the | earth.
11. You drench the furrows and smooth out the | ridges;
with heavy rain you soften the ground and bless its | increase.
12. You crown the year with your | goodness,
and your paths overflow with | plenty.
13. May the fields of the wilderness be rich for | grazing,
and the hills be clothed with joy.
14. May the meadows cover themselves with flocks,
and the valleys cloak themselves with | grain;
let them shout for joy and | sing.

THE GOSPEL

Matthew 13:1-9,18-23

Rev. Bill

Leader: A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew, the tenth chapter.

Later that day, Jesus left the house and sat down by the lake shore. Such great crowds gathered that he went and took a seat in a boat, while the crowd stood along the shore. He addressed them at length in parables: "One day, a farmer went out sowing seed. Some of the seed landed on a footpath, where birds came and ate it up. Some of the seed fell on rocky ground, where there was little soil. This seed sprouted at once since the soil had no depth, but when the sun rose and scorched it, it withered away for lack of roots. Again, some of the seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it. And some of it landed on good soil, and yielded a crop thirty, sixty, even a hundred times what was sown. Let those who have ears to hear, hear this!"

"Now listen to the parable of the sower. When people hear the message about the kingdom of God without understanding it, the Evil One comes along and snatches away what was sown in their hearts. This is the seed sown along the path. Those who received the seed that fell on rocky ground are the ones who hear the word and at first welcome it with joy. But they have no roots, so they last only for a while. When some setback or persecution comes because of the message, they quickly fall away. Those who receive the message that fell among the thorns are the ones who hear the word, but then worldly anxieties and the lure of wealth choke it off, and the message produces no fruit. But those who receive the seed that fell on rich soil are those who hear the message and understand it. They produce a crop that yields a hundred, or sixty or thirty times what was sown."

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

People: Thanks be to God.

REFLECTION

Rev. Bill

RESPONDING

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Rev. Bill

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**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.**

HYMN

"In the bulb there is a flower"

Promise, Natalie Sleeth, 1986

Natalie Sleeth, 1986

Capo 3: (D) F (Em) Gm

1 In the bulb there is a flow - er; in the seed, an ap - ple tree;
 2 There's a song in ev - ery si - lence, seek - ing word and mel - o - dy;
 3 In our end is our be - gin - ning; in our time, in - fin - i - ty;

(A7) C7 (D) F

in co - coons, a hid - den prom - ise: but - ter - flies will soon be free!
 there's a dawn in ev - ery dark - ness, bring - ing hope to you and me.
 in our doubt there is be - liev - ing; in our life, e - ter - ni - ty.

(D7) (G) (Em) (D) (Bm) (Em) (F#) (Bm)
 F7 Bb Gm F Dm Gm A Dm

In the cold and snow of win - ter there's a spring that waits to be,
 From the past will come the fu - ture; what it holds, a mys - ter - y,
 In our death, a res - ur - rec - tion; at the last, a vic - to - ry,

(G) (Em) (D) (Bm) (Em) (A7) (D)
 Bb Gm F Dm Gm C7 F

un - re - vealed un - til its sea - son, some - thing God a - lone can see.

THE OFFERTORY

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



MISSION INVITATION

Rev. Bill

"If you have more than enough material possessions and see your neighbors in need yet close your hearts to them, how can the love of God be living in you?"—1 John 3:17

Out of gratitude to God and in keeping with our mission and values, every week our offering goes to support a vanguard humanitarian organization. Cash and designated gifts go to support **B.R.E.A.D. (Building Responsibility, Equality, and Dignity)**. B.R.E.A.D. is the organization through which our congregation responds to our call to do justice. B.R.E.A.D. has a nearly 30-year history of improving the quality of life in Central Ohio by researching serious community problems and utilizing the power of people from a wide range of different faith traditions, to press public officials to implement proven solutions to those problems. B.R.E.A.D. rises! Thank you for your generosity.

You can use the QR code below to donate to both this week's mission and to First Church! If you are giving by cash or check and would also like to give something to First Congregational Church, please ask one of our deacons for an envelope and mark it accordingly. Thank you so much for your consideration and generosity. Any amount significant to you is significant to us.

"Put me to the test, says Yahweh Omnipotent, and see if I do not open windows in the sky and pour so much blessing on you that you cannot contain it!" –Malachi 3:10

OFFERTORY MUSIC

COMMUNION

Leader: Our God is here.

People: God's Spirit is with us.

Leader: Open your hearts to the One who is Love:

People: We open our hearts to You, O God.

Leader: Let us give thanks to God who sets us free.

People: It is our joy to give You thanks!

It is our shared joy to thank God for all God is doing in our lives, and for the time to gather around Christ's table and share the meal of remembrance, community, transformation. As we gather at this table, as we remember Christ, we also remember those who share the bread and the cup through time and space, as they return to the table nourished and comforted by the eternal and never-ending welcome of Christ.

When Jesus gathered with the students, the night before the trial, the night before execution, Jesus took bread, gave thanks for it, and broke it, saying This is my body, broken for you. When you do this, remember me. After supper, Jesus took the cup and blessed it, saying this is the cup of the New Covenant poured out for all. Whenever you drink from it, remember me.

Holy One, we join hearts and hands in this covenant of faith, this sacrament of transformation, and this observance of community and sustenance with all who wish to eat at Your table and with Your children the world over. Come Holy Spirit, Come. Twine yourself within these crumbs, dive deep within these cups, so that for us as we receive these elements, we receive nothing less than Your love and presence; when we go from this place, changed by this sacrament, we embody nothing less than Your love in the world.

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

People: Thanks be to God.

Leader: Come, for all things are ready.

COMMUNION HYMN

"Eat this bread"

Berthier, Jacques Berthier, 1984

Robert J. Batastini and the Taizé Community, 1984, alt.

The musical score is written for a four-part setting (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) in 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: "Eat this bread; drink this cup; come to me and nev - er be hun - gry. Eat this bread; drink this cup; trust in me and you will not thirst."

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Rev. Bill

Leader: Thank you, God of our hearts,
 For this meal and the love it expresses;
 For Your sacrifice and the intimacy with You that it brings;
 For Your commitment to reconcile the world to Yourself.

People: **May Your love, Your friendship and Your undeserved acceptance
 fill us, change us and inspire us
 that the world may grow into a place
 where all of God's children know they have found a home in You. Amen.**

SENDING

COMMUNITY NOTICES - DEPART TO SERVE

Melissa Kulwicki

Leader: Let us depart with a heart to serve.
 People: **Thanks be to God.**

*CLOSING HYMN

“Lead us from death to life”

World Peace Prayer, Marty Haugen, 1984

Satish Kumar, 1981



Lead us from death to life, from false-hood to
truth, from des - pair to hope, from fear to trust.
Lead us from hate to love, from war to
peace; let peace fill our hearts, let peace fill our
world, let peace fill our u - ni - verse.

*BENEDICTION

Rev. Bill

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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All scripture readings used in today's service are from *The Inclusive Bible*.

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LEADERSHIP IN TODAY'S LITURGY

The Rev. Dr. William R. Nirote, *preacher*

Julia Myers, *liturgist*

Melissa Kulwicki, *worship leader*

Cynthia Adcock, *pianist*

Emily Riggin, *soloist*

Geoffrey Dean, *livestream ministry*

Enter to Worship Depart to Serve

July 12, 2026

This Week at First Church

Sunday, July 12

- 9 a.m. Worship Service and Holy Communion (Parish Hall)
- 10 a.m. Family Playground Time (Playground)
- 11 a.m. Worship Service (Sanctuary)
- 12:15 p.m. Coffee Hour (Parish Hall)

Monday, July 13

- 9 a.m. WGSJ Park Executive Mtg (Zoom)
- 12 Noon Card Care Ministry (Fanning Rm)
- 6 p.m. Campanelle Rehearsal (Bell Rm)
- 7 p.m. Trustees Mtg (Classroom C & Zoom)

Tuesday, July 14

- 5 p.m. Reproductive Justice Mtg (Classroom C & Teams)
- 7 p.m. Executive Committee Mtg (Classroom C & Zoom)

Wednesday, July 15

Sacred Places Preservation Grant Construction Begins

- 10 a.m. The Largest Table Food Prep & Delivery (Kitchen)
- 6 p.m. Faith Formation Mtg (Classroom C & Teams)
- 6:30 p.m. Stephen Ministers Monthly Mtg (SM Office)

Thursday, July 16

- 11 a.m. Fiber Arts Ministry (Fanning Rm)
- 12 Noon Lunch Bunch (Ari's Diner, 1425 Frank Rd)

Sunday, July 19

- 9 a.m. Worship Service and Holy Communion (Parish Hall)
- 10 a.m. Family Playground Time (Playground)
- 11 a.m. Worship Service (Sanctuary)
- 12:15 p.m. Coffee Hour & Sales (Parish Hall)

Lunch Bunch at Ari's Thursday, July 16, at Noon

Join others from First Church at this south side diner for a nice lunch or a breakfast meal. Ari's on Frank Road opened in 2006 serving the community with classic diner comfort food and a few special dishes inspired by their Albanian roots. Founded by husband and wife duo Ari and Neta, the diner is a family-run labor of love.

Ari's is located at 1425 Frank Road.

For more information and to register on Realm please use the QR Code.



Adult Faith Formation Sunday, July 26, at 10 a.m. Classroom C

Alejandro Rodriguez will share information about the Washington Gladden Social Justice Park. Come learn about the Park's history, its plans, and why it's so important now as we strive for a more just society for all.

Family Playground Time! Today at 10 a.m. on the Sam Gordon Playground

Join the First Church playground gang between services having outdoor fun while parents catch up. We'll be outside playing every Sunday this summer, weather permitting.

Justice & Mercy Missions

Upcoming missions will be:

- July 12 - BREAD
- July 19 - Equal Justice Initiative
- July 26 - Bikes for All People

Good Works!

Engaging with Our Church and Our Community ... January – June 2026

Our church has been busy during the first six months of 2026. Though this is a period of ministerial transition, our church members continue to respond to God's call and to serve each other and our community. Over the next few weeks, we will highlight the activities and accomplishments of our commissions, boards, and Council.

Board of Deacons

We welcomed as new Deacons: Kelly Dodd, Sandra Geronimo, Dean Hafey, Cami Curren, and our new Senior Deacon-Elect, Gary Seigerst.

Our Holy Week and Easter Services included: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, a new Saturday Easter Vigil, and an added liturgy of foot washing. Sunday Easter services were the sunrise service at 7 a.m. and the Festival Worship and Holy Communion at 11 a.m.

We are reimagining the Diaconate by allowing more flexible service terms and fluid participation, and no longer requiring deacons serve a three-year term. The Deacon Manual is being updated to reflect changes in how the diaconate operates to make it more relevant for everyone

Preserving the Past, Stepping into the Future

The replacement of the front steps is a major component of the preservation grant project. At age 95, the steps cannot be effectively repaired other than by replacement.

Because the steps form the roof of mechanical rooms of the church, the stone must be removed to reestablish a weather proofing barrier for those rooms. Also, a new drainage system will be added for further protection.

The 1931 architectural plans directed that limestone be used for the steps to match limestone trim of many building features and other entrance landings. The Columbus Historical Resources Commission has approved plans to use limestone for replacement of the front steps. A buff color of limestone has been selected to best match what is being replaced.

This construction will begin on Wednesday, July 15, at which time access to the front steps will be blocked for the next 4 months. The west narthex door will be available for entry into the church. Other entry points will not be impacted. During the summer you will be invited to information sessions where you can learn more about the preservation grant project and how you can support it.

Keep in Prayer

Members Lynn Wallich; Jane Weddle; Victor John; Mary Day Fewless; Ramona Moenter; Nancy Livingston; Jane Ward; Grace Glaros and family; Beverly Halbe; Francille Firebaugh; Nancy Burba; John Carter; Clinton Brown; Dan Axt.

Family and friends Rev. Becky David; David Wyatt's uncle, Richard Hendrix Wyatt; Rev. Becky David's son, Gabe Stevens; Pat Patterson's friend, Cindy Shealy; Rev. Jess Young Chang's friend Rev. Steve Swisher's mother Barbara Swisher; Annette McCormick's sister, Kathy McCormick; Amy Wagner's great nephew, Brody Wilson, and friend Mitchell McGuire; Kathy Reed's cousin, Barbara Works; Malini Peter's friend, Usha Rangarajan; Susan Brooks' friends, Marti and Ned Timmons; Dakotah Saunders' friend, Trisha; Susie Loik's daughter, Kelly and son, Laeric; Janice Taft's cousin, Teri Williams; Shelly Gies' father, Robert Simms and brother, Mike Simms; Kevin Salem's uncle, Harold Allen; Jason Harrell's mother, Sherry Harrell; Matt Myers' sister, Erin Myers.

Those who mourn Jennifer Fry on the death of her friend, Dennis Moore; Melva Fisher on the death of her brother, James Garrison.

We keep Stephen Ministers in prayer as they care for our church members.

We keep our Search Committee and Our Future Pastor in our prayers.

In the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle, we pray for the people and churches of Eritrea and Ethiopia. We also pray for our UCC partner, the United Protestant Church of France.

Sacred Earth Eco Tip July is 'Plastic-Free Month'

There are many plastic swaps for every room in your home. One can start in the kitchen.

- Beeswax food wraps instead of plastic wrap are an easy swap. They are washable, compostable, and designed for reuse.
- Reusable shopping bags are also better than plastic store bags.
- Repurposed glass jars make great containers for sauces, salsa, and other leftovers.
- Dish soap bars eliminate the need for a plastic bottle. Pair it with a bamboo dish brush to make a durable cleaning solution.

[EcoRoots.us](#) is a possible resource for many eco-friendly products for the home. Making ONE change is a starting point to making our world more sustainable.

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

Senior Deacon: Dayna McCrary

Deacons: Fubara Braide, Stella Braide, Camilla Curren, Kelly Dodd, Sandra Geronimo, Dean Hafez, 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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