



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

WORSHIP AT NINE
SEPTEMBER 13, 2026
SIXTEENTH 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

Holy Manna, William Moore's Columbian Harmony, 1825

"All who hunger gather gladly"

Sylvia G. Dunstan, 1990

All who hun-ger gath-er glad-ly; ho-ly man-na is our bread.

Come from wil-der-ness and wan-dering. Here, in truth, we will be fed.

You that yearn for days of full-ness, all a-round us is our food.

Taste and see the grace e-ter-nal. Taste and see that God is good.

*INVOCATION

Dean Hafey

Leader: Sacred One, Holy One, Eternal One,
Forgive seventy times seven, Your word says.
My ways are not Your ways, Your word says.
Yet over and over, we dole out judgment and demand restitution,
forgetting that Your word is final, and Your Love endures forever.

People: **Abide with us as we put before You our listening hearts
and our overwhelmed minds.
Hold us close, show us Your way.
Hold us close in your bosom of love.
Amen.**

*WELCOME AND PASSING OF THE PEACE

Rev. jess

During the sermon time, our young children are welcome to participate in "Godly Play."

Dean Hafey

People: Thanks be to God.

Psalm 103:1–8

6. The Lord executes | righteousness
and judgment for all who are op- | pressed.
7. He made his ways known to | Moses
and his works to the children of | Israel.
8. The Lord is full of compassion and | mercy,
slow to anger and of great | kindness.

THE GOSPEL

Matthew 18:21-35

Rev. jess

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

Peter came up and asked Jesus, "When a sister or brother wrongs me, how many times must I forgive? Seven times?"

"No," Jesus replied, "not seven times; I tell you seventy times seven. And here's why.

"The kin-dom of heaven is like a ruler who decided to settle accounts with the royal officials. When the audit was begun, one was brought in who owed tens of millions of dollars. As the debtor had no way of paying, the ruler ordered this official to be sold, along with family and property, in payment of the debt.

"At this, the official bowed down in homage and said, 'I beg you, your highness, be patient with me and I will pay you back in full!' Moved with pity, the ruler let the official go and wrote off the debt.

"Then that same official went out and met a colleague who owed the official twenty dollars. The official seized and throttled this debtor with the demand, 'Pay back what you owe me!' "The debtor dropped to the ground and began to plead, 'Just give me time and I will pay you back in full!' But the official would hear none of it, and instead had the colleague put in debtor's prison until the money was paid.

"When the other officials saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and went to the ruler, reporting the entire incident. The ruler sent for the official and said, 'You worthless wretch! I cancelled your entire debt when you pleaded with me. Should you not have dealt mercifully with your colleague, as I dealt with you?' Then in anger, the ruler handed the official over to be tortured until the debt had been paid in full.

"My Abba in heaven will treat you exactly the same way unless you truly forgive your sisters and brothers from your hearts."

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

People: Thanks be to God.

REFLECTION

Rev. jess

RESPONDING

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Rev. jess

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

“Praise, my soul, the God of heaven”

Henry Francis Lyte, 1834; rev. Ecumenical Women’s Center, 1974

Lauda Anima, John Goss, 1869

1 Praise, my soul, the God of heav - en; glad of heart your
 2 Praise God for the grace and fa - vor shown our fore - bears
 3 Like a lov - ing par - ent car - ing, God knows well our
 4 An - gels, teach us ad - o - ra - tion; you be - hold God

car - ols raise; ran - sored, healed, re - stored, for - giv - en,
 in dis - tress; God is still the same for - ev - er,
 fee - ble frame, glad - ly all our bur - dens bear - ing,
 face to face. Sun and moon and all cre - a - tion,

who, like me, should sing God’s praise? Al - le - lu - ia!
 slow to chide, and swift to bless. Al - le - lu - ia!
 still to count - less years the same. Al - le - lu - ia!
 dwell - ers all in time and space: Al - le - lu - ia!

Al - le - lu - ia! Praise the Mak - er all your days!
 Al - le - lu - ia! Sing our Mak - er’s faith - ful - ness!
 Al - le - lu - ia! All with - in me, praise God’s name!
 Al - le - lu - ia! Praise with us the God of grace!

STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Steve Sterrett,
 Commissioner, Stewardship and Growth

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



“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 this week go to **First Church’s Unsheltered Ministry**, whose priority is to help unsheltered people get into safe, affordable housing, and to help them sustain themselves until that housing is available. We partner with agencies and nonprofits to assist unsheltered people in locating housing, and to guide them through the housing application process, including replacing IDs and other documents. We sometimes help with security deposits or partial first-month rent, and we have matched start-up renters with folks who can donate used household goods. We assist unhoused neighbors by supplying them with food and essential personal items. The ministry also helps with a more visible service, in the form of our ongoing rental of a port-a-john in the church parking lot – addressing a vitally important need. The ministry has served over 90 people and has been blessed by their gracious thanks. Most expenses have been funded by individual donations from a handful of church members, but the need continues to grow, so your generosity and volunteer support will be deeply appreciated.

You can use the QR code 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 ANTHEM

Geoffrey Gear

COMMUNION

Rev. jess

Leader: We are the body of Christ.

People: We are made one body through the love of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Leader: We gather at the table to retell the story of death, resurrection, and oneness with God. The night Jesus was betrayed, he gathered with his friends:

People: Friends who would betray him, friends who would deny him, friends who would flee from him.

Leader: Still, out of love, Jesus gathered them unto himself, so they could eat, connect and remember.

Breaking the bread, He gave us the words of our sacrament:

People: Take, eat. This is my body broken for you. Eat it to remember me.

Leader: After supper, Jesus poured and blessed the cup, and gave us the meaning of our remembrance:

People: **Take, drink. This is my blood, shed for all. Drink it to remember me.**

Leader: Anointed One, we gather at Your table to affirm Your sacrifice and our faith.
By making ourselves one in Your sacrament, we unmake our fears,
our limitations, and our obstacles to Your way.

People: **We join hearts and hands in this covenant of faith
and this observance of community and sustenance.**

Leader: 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.

People: **In the name of Jesus and for the sake of the world we pray, Amen.**

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

People: **Thanks be to God.**

Leader: Come, for all things are ready.

COMMUNION HYMN

Confitemini Domino, Jacques Berthier, 1982

“Come and fill our hearts”

Jacques Berthier, 1982

Chord markings: D, Bm, D, A, Em, C, Em, A, D

Lyrics: Come and fill our hearts with your peace. You a-lone, O Lord, are ho-ly.
Come and fill our hearts with your peace. Al-le-lu-ia!

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Rev. jess

Leader: Beloved Lord,
You have made us Your friend, one with You,
in the breaking of bread and the sharing of cup.

People: **We thank you for community that connects us all.
May we take this connection into Your world
and share it widely with all You love. 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 Me, Guide Me, Doris Akers, 1953

"Lead me, guide me"

Doris Akers, 1953

Refrain

Lead me, guide me, a - long the way, for if you

lead me, I can - not stray. Lord, let me walk each

day with thee. Lead me, O Lord, lead me. Fine

*BENEDICTION

Rev. jess

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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LEADERSHIP IN TODAY'S LITURGY

The Rev. jessica young chang, *preacher*

Dean Hafey, *liturgist*

Leslie Fulford, *worship leader*

Melissa Kulwicki, *worship leader*

Joshua Stafford, *pianist*

Geoffrey Gear, *soloist*

Geoffrey Dean, *livestream ministry*

Enter to Worship
Depart to Serve

September 13, 2026

This Week at First Church

Sunday, September 13

- 9 a.m. Worship Service and
Holy Communion (Parish Hall)
Godly Play (Godly Play Rm)
- 10 a.m. Adult Faith Formation (Classroom C)
Family Playground Time (Playground)
Legacy Sunday Update Mtg
(Parish Family Rm)
- 11 a.m. Worship Service (Sanctuary)
- 12:15 p.m. Coffee Hour (Parish Hall)
BREAD Mtg (Parish Family Rm)
Confirmation Class (Classroom C)
- 4 p.m. Brahms Requiem Commemorating
September 11, 2001 (Sanctuary)

Monday, September 14

- 6 p.m. First Church Campanelle Rehearsal (Bell Rm)
Visitation Ministry Mtg (Teams)
- 7 p.m. Trustees Mtg (Classroom C & Zoom)
Preservation Grant Informational Session
(home of Paul and Melody Leidheiser)

Tuesday, September 15

- 1 p.m. Preservation Grant Informational Session
(Teams)
- 7 p.m. Budget & Finance Meeting
(Classroom C & Zoom)
Church Council Mtg (Classroom C & Teams)

Wednesday, September 16

- 10 a.m. The Largest Table Food Prep & Delivery
(Kitchen)
- 6:30 p.m. Stephen Ministers Supervision Mtg (SM Office)
- 7 p.m. Preservation Grant Informational Session
(home of Martha & Hank Wilson)

Thursday, September 17

- 11 a.m. Fiber Arts Ministry (Fanning Rm)
- 6 p.m. First Church Ringers Rehearsal (Bell Rm)

Sunday, September 20

- 9 a.m. Worship Service and
Holy Communion (Parish Hall)
Godly Play (Godly Play Rm)
- 10 a.m. Adult Faith Formation (Classroom C)
Family Playground Time (Playground)
- 11 a.m. Worship Service (Sanctuary)
- 12:15 p.m. Coffee Hour (Parish Hall)
Preserving the Past Info Session
(Classroom C)
- 1 p.m. Green Lawn Tour
(Green Lawn Cemetery)

Adult Faith Formation **Today at 10:00 a.m. in Classroom C**

History and Preservation

Tom Worley will lead this program on the history of Rose Windows and details about our church's own Rose Window. As part of the program, Tom will provide information about the preservation grant project and the fundraising campaign.

Godly Play **Today at 9 a.m.**

This year, Godly Play Sunday school class will be offered during the 9 a.m. worship hour. Godly Play is a creative, imaginative approach to children's faith formation led by Miss Melissa and Mr. Todd.

Geared toward preschool through 6th grade, children of all ages are welcome. Families can come with their children to the 9 a.m. worship, get a snack, and go to the Godly Play Room after the welcome with Miss Leslie. Children will return to Parish Hall for communion. Come join in the fun!

Laundry Love is collecting calendars for the year 2027. There is a box in the education wing marked for Laundry Love Calendars. Last year the calendars were appreciated by our Laundry Love community. Thank you for your donations to Laundry Love.

Adult Faith Formation

Sunday, September 20, at 10 a.m. in Classroom C

Voting our Values -- How Your Vote this Year Affects Healthcare for Ohioans

Please join Cami Curren, MD, a Columbus leader of the Committee to Protect Healthcare (protectmed.org), as we discuss the trajectory of health care, human rights, and how to change this.

In Ohio, half a million of us have lost healthcare due to ACA cuts so far, and millions more will lose coverage due to work requirements starting in January. Several of our critical access hospitals are on the chopping block.

A federal movement aims to cut healthcare costs nationwide and to undermine standard healthcare in our country. This will cost American lives.

Learn how your vote can help safeguard care now and in the future. Learn how you can oppose the trend of anti-science and learn how you can see through the smokescreen of budget cuts that threatens us all.

Dinner Out

Wednesday, September 23, at 6 p.m.

Join fellow church members at Hunan Lion, a family-run restaurant in northwest Columbus. Voted the best Chinese restaurant in Columbus, you can indulge in the taste of authentic Chinese cuisine and experience their culture. Their family has dedicated over 38 years creating a casual and inviting atmosphere where one can enjoy the delicious cuisine.

Please use the QR Code on Realm to reserve your place at the table.



Thoughts on Gratitude

"Gratitude is the appreciation of things that are not deserved, earned, or demanded - those wonderful things that we take for granted."

Renee Paule

September 27 is Legacy Sunday

We will have one hour of worship on Sunday, September 27, at 10 a.m. followed by a church-wide potluck picnic. Please plan to join in for this time of fellowship as we draw closer to our 175th year as a congregation.

In addition to great food, there will be games for all ages. Also, First Serves will give us a chance to support Church World Service. It will be a fun time together.

Trustees will provide grilled burgers, hot dogs, veggie burgers and beverages. We ask you to bring a dish to share according to your last name:

A-F - Side Dish **G-M** - Dessert **N-Z** - Salad/Appetizer

Plates, napkins and utensils will be provided. Invitations will be handed out today at both services. You can also register on Realm.

Please Save the NEW Date!

Sunday, October 25

First Church Engagement Fair in Parish Hall

following 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. worship

Come celebrate our meaningful projects and activities on Sunday, October 25, in Parish Hall, following the 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. worship services.

Learn about our mission projects and explore opportunities for service that speak to your heart! See the many ways we work in the community and within our church family. From small discussion groups to "done in a day" projects to serving on a committee or commission, you'll find opportunities for connection and service at the Fair.

Tasty food will be served! You can visit our First Church FREE Store and snag First Church items, including books, t-shirts, water bottles, and more. You can obtain a First Church name tag and connect with folks you see in worship but might not have talked with yet, putting names with faces. We'll celebrate our mission activities, community, and friendships!

Justice & Mercy Missions

Upcoming missions will be:

Sept. 13 - FCC Unsheltered Ministry

Sept. 20 - Good Samaritan Fund

Sept. 27 - Legacy Fund

Keep in Prayer

Members Margaret Cipriani; Brittney Dean; Sandy Mathias; Matt Stevens and Jim Velo; Jane Weddle; Victor John; Ramona Moenter; Jane Ward; Grace Glaros and family; Beverly Halbe; Francille Firebaugh; Nancy Burba; John Carter; Clinton Brown; Dan Axt.

Family and friends Amanda Butler's father, Tom Lynch; Kevin Salem's uncle, Harold Allen and niece, Clare Salem; Vicki Lyden's sister, Connie Dolder; Leslie Fulford's sister, Kim Barth, and brother-in-law, Al Fulford; Pat Patterson's friend, Cindy Shealy; Jenny Provenzano's mother, Joyce Beitzel; Melissa Kulwicki's father, Jack Blandi, and her mother-in-law, Beverly Kulwicki; Rev. Becky David; David Wyatt's uncle, Richard Hendrix Wyatt; 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; Jason Harrell's mother, Sherry Harrell; and Matt Myers' sister, Erin Myers.

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 Ghana and Nigeria. We also pray for our UCC partner, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.

Preserving the Past, Stepping into the Future

The church is offering a series of information sessions to provide a time to learn more about the preservation grant project and answer your questions. See the listing below for dates and times.

Date	Time	Location	Host
Sunday, 9/13	10 a.m.	Classroom C	Tom Worley
Monday, 9/14	7 p.m.	Home of the hosts	Paul & Melody Leidheiser
Tuesday, 9/15	1 p.m.	Virtual Link: https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/222814744565587?p=Ei1CHYKSgNrIphI6q2	Tom Worley
Wednesday, 9/16	7 p.m.	Home of the hosts	Martha & Hank Wilson
Sunday, 9/20	12:15 p.m.	Classroom D	

We will support our church's future and celebrate its heritage in 2027

By Steve Sterrett, commissioner, Stewardship and Growth Commission

Even as our congregation is in a time of discernment and ministerial transition, we continue on our journey in response to God's call to be a beacon of light in the city. In 2027, we will celebrate the visionary leaders and dedicated church members who have brought us this far in 175 years, but we also must recommit ourselves to continuing their work as we fulfill today's appeal for love, community and service.

During the worship services over the next five Sundays, lay leaders will offer brief reports on the accomplishments of our commissions and boards in 2026 and their aspirations for what they hope to achieve in 2027. Their reports will be printed in "Connections" and "Depart to Serve." Taken together, these aspirations will create a compelling vision for our future, even as we celebrate our past.

Our 2027 stewardship campaign will kick off on Sunday, October 11, with the theme: "First Congregational Church: Faith and Love in Action." I hope the reports from our lay leaders will inspire you as you learn how your investment of time, talent and treasure is multiplied in faith and service to God, each other, and our larger community.

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 Hafe, 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: Nathaniel Powell

Communications and Technology Commission-elect:

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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