



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

WORSHIP AT ELEVEN
SEPTEMBER 20, 2026
SEVENTEENTH 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.

Please use this time for quiet preparation for worship.

VOLUNTARY

Prelude on *Dix*

Peter C. Lutkin, 1908

ENTER TO WORSHIP

(written by The Rev. Catherine Rolling)

Mr. Moses Murray

Leader: The Holy One is here in this community of faith:

People: Great is our God and greatly to be praised!

Leader: Let us bless the Holy Name forever and ever.

People: Great is our God and greatly to be praised!

*Please stand as you are able. (*indicates congregation standing)*

*Leader: Let us meditate on God's wondrous works.

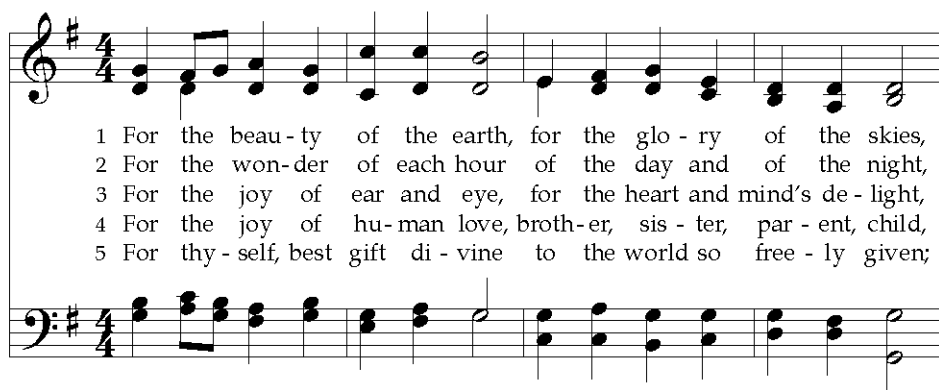
People: Great is our God and greatly to be praised!

Leader: Let us bless and praise God's name forever and ever.

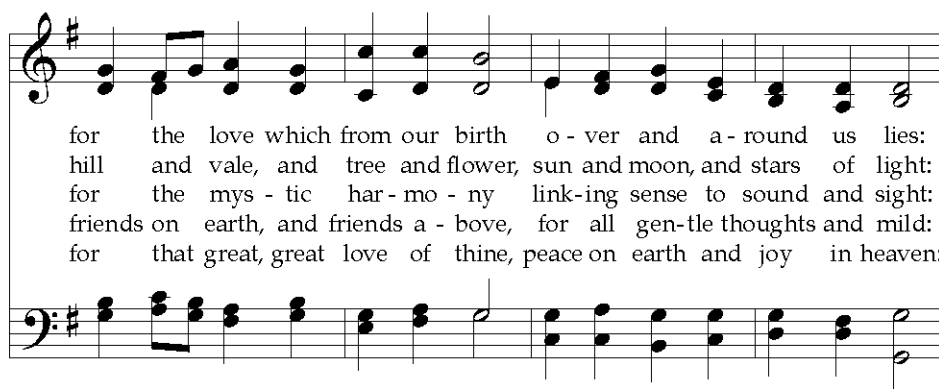
People: Great is our God and greatly to be praised!

*PROCESSIONAL HYMN
"For the beauty of the earth"

Dix, Conrad Kocher, 1838
Folliott Sanford Pierpoint, 1864, alt.

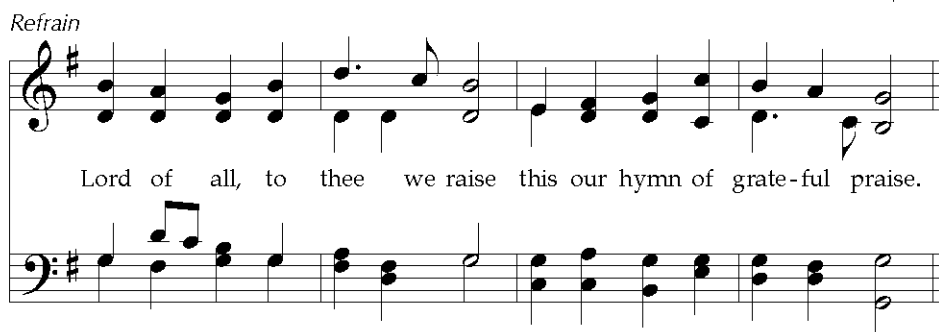


1 For the beau-ty of the earth, for the glo-ry of the skies,
2 For the won-der of each hour of the day and of the night,
3 For the joy of ear and eye, for the heart and mind's de-light,
4 For the joy of hu-man love, broth-er, sis-ter, par-ent, child,
5 For thy-self, best gift di-vine to the world so free-ly given;



for the love which from our birth o-ver and a-round us lies:
hill and vale, and tree and flower, sun and moon, and stars of light:
for the mys-tic har-mo-ny link-ing sense to sound and sight:
friends on earth, and friends a-bove, for all gen-tle thoughts and mild:
for that great, great love of thine, peace on earth and joy in heaven:

Refrain



Lord of all, to thee we raise this our hymn of grate-ful praise.

*WELCOME AND PASSING OF THE PEACE

Rev. jessica young chang

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.*

A LITANY FOR THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW SUNDAY SCHOOL YEAR Rev. Sarah Reed & Leslie Fulford

Leader: Let us rejoice in the turning of the seasons and
the beginning of school years and education programs.
We celebrate the beginning of this new season of our Faith Formation ministries and
learning opportunities for all ages.

People: We celebrate the message of God's love, welcome, and inclusion of all people.

Leader: We give thanks for the gift of learning about God's presence in our lives
through our Sacred Scriptures with the support of this Christian community.

**People: We give thanks for the many ways
that we can respond and share God's love with all ages.**

Leader: For children who come with curiosity, questions, energy and enthusiasm:

People: We give you thanks, O God.

Leader: For teachers, counselors, nurses, teachers' aids, and support staff
who share their time and talents in teaching our young people and adults.

People: We give you thanks, O God.

Leader: For all who participate in the spiritual nurture of our congregation.

People: We give you thanks, O God.

Leader: We pray for protection, connection, and creativity for students of all ages,
that they may be safe to learn in community and with grace and openness.

People: Keep them safe, O God.

Leader: We pray for wisdom and insight in the hearts and minds of those in education
in this church, in this city, in this state,
that they may know the true way of guiding learners and thinkers.

People: Give them strength and peace, O God.

Leader: We dedicate this new year of learning to you, O God,
and pray that all of us will continue to grow in
faith and love as followers of Jesus Christ.

All: Thanks be to God. Amen.

INVOCATION

Rev. Reed

Leader: Holy One, You have promised to be with us,
And long ago sent Your Spirit to abide among us
and guide us to a future of goodness and hope.
We come seeking Your truth, Your justice, Your kindness.

**People: O God, You are with us this morning.
Let us feel Your presence and
welcome You into our lives.
Come and fill these desires of our hearts. Amen.**

ANTHEM

"Seek ye first"

Marques L. A. Garrett, 2012
Matthew 6:31-33, Psalm 23:6

Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;
and all these things shall be added unto you.
Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink?
for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever and ever. Amen.

Leader: A reading from the Book of Exodus, the sixteenth chapter.

They began to complain against Moses and Aaron there in the wilderness. The people of Israel said to them, "If only we had died by YHWH's hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat next to pots of meat and ate our bread till we were filled! But now you have brought the whole community out into this wilderness to die of hunger!"

Then YHWH said to Moses, "Look, I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people will go out and gather a day's portion every day, so that I can test them to see if they will follow my instructions. " On the sixth day, when they prepare what they brought in, it will be twice as much as the daily gathering."

So Moses and Aaron said to the Israelites, "In the evening you will know that it was YHWH who brought you up out of Egypt, and in the morning you will witness the glory of God, the One to whom you directed your complaints, for who are we, that you should complain to us?" Moses continued, "It is YHWH who will give you meat in the evening for your meal, and all the bread you want in the morning, because YHWH has heard your complaints. For it is not to us that you are complaining—who are we? But to YHWH."

Then Moses said to Aaron, "Tell the whole Israelite community, 'Present yourselves before YHWH, who has heard your complaints.'"

As Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of YHWH appearing in the form of a cloud. Then YHWH spoke to Moses and said, "I have heard the complaining of the people of Israel. Say this to them: 'In the evening you will eat meat, and in the morning you will have your fill of bread. Then you will know that I, YHWH, am your God.'"

So it came about that in the evening quail flew in and all around the camp. And in the morning there was a layer of dew all around the camp; when the layer of dew evaporated, there on the surface of the desert were flakes of something: delicate, powdery, fine as frost.

When they saw this, the people of Israel said to each other, "What is it?", not knowing what it was. But Moses told them, "This is the bread YHWH has given you to eat."

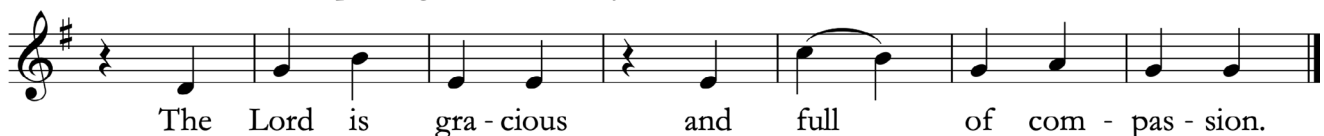
Leader: The Word of God for the people of God.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE PSALTER

Psalm 145:1–8

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



I will exalt you, O God my King,
and bless your Name for ever and ever.
Every day will I bless you
and praise your Name for ever and ever.

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised;
there is no end to his greatness.
One generation shall praise your works to another
and shall declare your power.

Antiphon

I will ponder the glorious splendor of your majesty
and all your marvelous works.
They shall speak of the might of your wondrous acts,
and I will tell of your greatness.
They shall publish the remembrance of your great goodness;
they shall sing of your righteous deeds.
The Lord is gracious and full of compassion,
slow to anger and of great kindness.

Antiphon

THE SECOND SCRIPTURE READING

Phillipians 1:21-30

Mr. Murray

Leader: A reading from the Letter of Paul to the Phillipians, the first chapter.

For to me, “life” means Christ; hence, dying is only so much gain. If, on the other hand, I am to continue living on earth, that means productive toil for me—and I honestly don’t know which I prefer. I’m strongly attracted to both: I long to be freed from this life and to be with Christ, for that is the far better thing; yet it’s more urgent that I remain alive for your sakes. This fills me with the confidence that I will stay with you and persevere with you all, for the sake of your joy and your progress in the faith. My being with you once again should make you even prouder of me in Christ. Conduct yourselves, then, in a way worthy of the Gospel of Christ. If you do, whether I come and see you myself or hear about your behavior from a distance, it will be clear that you’re standing firm in unity of spirit, and exerting yourselves with one accord for the faith of the Gospel, without being intimidated by your enemies. Standing together without fear is an indication that they will be destroyed and you will be saved. It’s a divine signal that God—on behalf of our Savior—has given you the privilege of believing in and suffering for Christ. You’re now experiencing the same struggle that you saw in me—and now hear that I still have.

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

People: Thanks be to God.

*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Luke 8:15

The Choir introduces the Alleluia, which is then repeated by the Congregation.

Following the verse, all repeat the Alleluia.



Verse: Blessed are they who have kept the word with a generous heart
and yield a harvest through perseverance.

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

“The kingdom of heaven is like the owner of an estate who went out at dawn to hire workers for the vineyard. After reaching an agreement with them for the usual daily wage, the owner sent them out to the vineyard. “About mid-morning, the owner came out and saw others standing around the marketplace without work, and said to them, ‘You go along to my vineyard and I will pay you whatever is fair.’ At that they left. “Around noon and again in the mid-afternoon, the owner came out and did the same. Finally, going out late in the afternoon, the owner found still others standing around and said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day?’ “ ‘No one has hired us,’ they replied. “The owner said, ‘You go to my vineyard, too.’ “When evening came, the owner said to the overseer, ‘Call the workers and give them their pay, but begin with the last group and end with the first.’ When those hired late in the afternoon came up, they received a full day’s pay, and when the first group appeared they assumed they would get more. Yet they all received the same daily wage. “Thereupon they complained to the owner, ‘This last group did only an hour’s work, but you’ve put them on the same basis as those who worked a full day in the scorching heat.’ “ ‘My friends,’ said the owner to those who voiced this complaint, ‘I do you no injustice. You agreed on the usual wage, didn’t you? Take your pay and go home. I intend to give this worker who was hired last the same pay as you. I’m free to do as I please with my money, aren’t I? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ “Thus the last will be first and the first will be last.”

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

People: Thanks be to God.

SERMON

"From Anxiety to Grace"

Rev. Reed

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

(written by Christine Longhurst)

Rev. young chang

Leader: ...Lord, in Your mercy,

People: hear our prayer.

THE LORD’S PRAYER

Leader: Let us join our voices together in the prayer of Jesus.

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

“For the fruit of all creation”

East Acklam, Francis Jackson, 1957

Fred Pratt Green, 1970



1 For the fruit of all cre - a - tion, thanks be to
2 In the just re - ward of la - bor, God's will be
3 For the har - vests of the Spi - rit, thanks be to



God. For his gifts to ev - ery na - tion,
done. In the help we give our neigh - bor,
God. For the good we all in - her - it,



thanks be to God. For the plow - ing, sow - ing, reap - ing,
God's will be done. In our world - wide task of car - ing
thanks be to God. For the won - ders that as - tound us,



si - lent growth while we are sleep - ing, fu - ture needs in
for the hun - gry and de - spair - ing, in the har - vests
for the truths that still con-found us, most of all that



earth's safe - keep - ing, thanks be to God.
we are shar - ing, God's will be done.
love has found us, thanks be to God.

STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Antoinette Koolemans-Beynen, Church Vitality Chair

THE OFFERTORY

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



"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. 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 donations and designated gifts this week go to support First Church's **Good Samaritan Fund**, a ministry that has served our neighbors in the Columbus community since 2002. Each month "Good Sam" provides financial help to people in need who come to our church seeking assistance. Over the years, the program has helped those facing serious hardships with many services, including payment of utility bills that are in disconnection status, providing gift cards for food or gasoline, and acquiring birth certificates. Every effort is made to meet the unique, emergency needs of these neighbors. Very often, the people we help are only one unexpected medical bill or other expense away from being evicted and becoming a homeless family. Increases in the number of folks in need, as well as rising costs, have led to reductions in how much Good Sam can offer each neighbor. Thank you for generous support of this vital First Church ministry to our wider community.

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 use one of the giving envelopes available in the pew racks, and mark it accordingly. Thank you so much for your consideration and generosity. Any amount significant to you is significant to us.

"Put the entire tithe into the storehouse so there be food in my house! 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

Martin Shaw, 1923

"With a voice of singing"

adapted from Psalm 66

With a voice of singing, declare ye this and let it be heard: Alleluia.

Utter it even unto the ends of the earth. The Lord hath delivered his people. Alleluia.

O be joyful in God, all ye lands.

O sing praises to the honor of his name, make his praise to be glorious.

*DOXOLOGY

Old 100th

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

Praise Christ, all creatures here below;

Praise Holy Spirit evermore;

Praise Triune God, whom we adore. Amen.

COMMUNITY NOTICES - DEPART TO SERVE

Melissa Kulwicki

Leader: Let us depart with a heart to serve.

People: Thanks be to God.

*CLOSING HYMN

“Guide me, O thou great Jehovah”

Cwm Rhondda, John Hughes, 1907

William Williams, 1762, alt.

1 Guide me, O thou great Je - ho - vah, pil - grim through this
 2 O - pen now the crys - tal foun - tain, whence the heal - ing
 3 When I tread the verge of Jor - dan, bid my anx - ious
 bar - ren land. I am weak, but thou art might - y. Hold me
 stream doth flow. Let the fire and cloud - y pil - lar lead me
 fears sub - side. Death of death, and hell's de - struc - tion, land me
 with thy power - ful hand. Bread of heav - en, bread of heav - en,
 all my jour - ney through. Strong de - liv - erer, strong de - liv - erer,
 safe on Ca - naan's side. Songs of prais - es, songs of prais - es
 feed me till I want no more; feed me till I want no more.
 be thou still my strength and shield; be thou still my strength and shield.
 I will ev - er give to thee; I will ev - er give to thee.

BENEDICTION

Rev. Reed

VOLUNTARY

Cwm Rhondda

Paul Manz, 1974

Please be seated for the voluntary.

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 one of our pastors or anyone wearing a name tag. We would be delighted to assist you.

† THE FLOWERS THIS MORNING are given to the glory of God and in celebration of Jim's birthday by Carol Gallagher.

† PLEASE JOIN US IN PARISH HALL FOR COFFEE HOUR, hosted by the Budget and Finance Committee, led by Ramona Moenter and Annette McCormick.

† GREETING AT THE EXITS

Rev. Reed — Narthex (Broad Street entrance)

Rev. young chang— East Door (Ninth Street entrance by the Church Office)

Mrs. Fulford — West Door (Cleveland Avenue entrance by the Chapel)

† PERMISSIONS AND COPYRIGHTS

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

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LEADERSHIP IN TODAY'S LITURGY

The Rev. Sarah Reed, *preacher*

The Rev. jessica young chang, *worship leader*

Moses Murray, *liturgist*

Melissa Kulwicki, *worship leader*

Jack Drake, *crucifer*

Jason Harrell and Sebastian Kulwicki, *vergers*

Joshua Stafford, *organist and director*

The First Church Choir

Gregory Halbe, *livestream ministry*

Enter to Worship
Depart to Serve

September 20, 2026

This Week at First Church

Sunday, September 20

- 9 a.m. Worship Service and
 Holy Communion (Parish Hall)
 Godly Play (Library)
- 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 D)
- 1 p.m. Green Lawn Tour
 (Green Lawn Cemetery)

Monday, September 21

- 6 p.m. First Church Campanelle Rehearsal (Bell Rm)
- 7 p.m. Transition Team Mtg (Fanning Rm & Zoom)

Tuesday, September 22

- 6:30 p.m. Sacred Journeys through Reproductive
 Justice Mtg (Teams)
- 7 p.m. Deacons Mtg (Zoom)

Wednesday, September 23

- 6 p.m. Dinner Out (Hunan Lion)
 Faith Formation Mtg (Classroom C & Teams)
- 7 p.m. 175th Anniversary Planning Mtg (Teams)

Thursday, September 24

- 6 p.m. First Church Ringers Rehearsal (Bell Rm)

Friday, September 25

- 6 p.m. Faith Mission Food Prep & Serve (Kitchen)

Sunday, September 27

- 10 a.m. Worship Service (Sanctuary)
- 11:15 p.m. Legacy Sunday Picnic, First Serves,
 Games & Fun (West Lawn)

Godly Play Today at 9 a.m.

The Godly Play Sunday school class will be held in the Library 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. During the 9 a.m. worship, children can get a snack, then go to the Library with Miss Leslie. Children will return to Parish Hall for communion. Come join in the fun!

Adult Faith Formation Today 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.

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.

Family Playground Time! Today at 10:00 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.

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.



First Congregational Church Puts Faith into Action on Legacy Sunday!

This Legacy Sunday, First Church will put faith into action by assembling 54 Church World Services Cleanup Buckets for neighbors recovering from disasters.

Recent flooding across Ohio and Indiana has left families facing the difficult work of cleaning up and beginning again. In response, Church World Service and the Heartland Conference of the United Church of Christ worked together to provide hundreds of CWS Kits and Cleanup Buckets to affected communities.

Now, our congregation is helping make sure supplies are ready when the next disaster strikes. Each Cleanup Bucket we assemble is more than a collection of cleaning supplies—it's a practical reminder to our neighbors that they are not alone.

How can you help? We need hands-on volunteers at the picnic as well as a set up crew, Sunday morning. All ages welcome! Please contact Leslie Fulford at lfulford@first-church.org if you can help, .

Thank you to Matt Stevens and the Vogt family for leading this project and to all the Legacy Sunday participants who will help turn compassion into action!

In October, First Serves will be collecting Halloween Candy for Gladden Community House. Please leave the candy at the Giving Tree by October 18!

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.

Calling All Pie Bakers! Show off your pie baking skills at the Legacy Sunday Pie Contest

Bakers of all ages are invited to bring your best home-baked creation. There will be two categories: **ADULT** and **YOUTH**.

Everyone will get to taste the pies and vote for their favorite. The winners receives bragging rights as

BEST PIE BAKERS 2026!

Step up on Legacy Sunday

In addition to registering on Realm and by turning in the invitations to attend Legacy Sunday, please know that it takes a lot of work for Legacy Sunday to be a fun time for all. Trustees, Church Vitality, along with Faith Formation and House and Grounds commissions all help in the setup and cleanup.

We could use some more help and would appreciate your using the QR Code to sign up and volunteer to help.



Keep in Prayer

Celebrating the birth of Brittney Dean's son and Jackie Dean's great grandson, Jayce; and Leslie and David Fulford's granddaughter, Evelyn Ann, to parents, Alli and Kyle Barta.

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 Jim and Gail Lowe's daughter, Kim Lowe; 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; 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.

Those who mourn Kathy Reed and family on the death of her cousin, Barbara Works.

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 Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay. We also pray for our UCC partner, the House of Hope in Haiti.

Preserving the Past, Stepping into the Future

Construction continues for the grant preservation project. In a few weeks, most of the tuckpointing work will be completed and the restored Rose Window will be reinstalled. Soon after, the front steps will be replaced. The project is on schedule and is to be completed by the end of this year.

As a congregation, we agreed to accept a \$250,000 national grant and the condition to raise any needed matching funds. All members and friends of the church are asked to turn in a pledge card no later than September 30. We need everyone's participation to raise the remaining \$200,000 towards the \$1 million grant project.

Visit the grant project website: www.first-church.org/preservation for more information, or to complete an online pledge form. For every new dollar pledged, it is matched by \$4 of other grants and special gifts. We need your pledge card now even if your gift will be made later this year or next. We need know if we can cover the construction costs now under contract.

Sacred Earth Eco Tip

Autumn begins on Tuesday, September 22. Some of us are called to hibernate when autumn arrives, and we love the coziness that candles provide during the cooler months. Do you know that most candles on the market are made from paraffin wax, a product of petroleum refining?

A more environmentally friendly choice is candles made from beeswax. You can find them at local markets or craft fairs (helps to avoid the carbon costs of shipping). Be sure to do your research before you stock up on products that make you feel cozy during the fall and winter.

Justice & Mercy Missions

Upcoming missions will be:

September 20 - Good Samaritan Fund

September 27 - Legacy Fund

October 4 - BREAD

Faith Formation Aspirations

By Mariner Taft, Faith Formation Commissioner

What does "aspiration" mean? A quick internet check of a dictionary definition shows it means reaching for a goal or item higher than what has been achieved either in the present or the past. To get ready for the stewardship campaign, the stewardship and growth commission asked the faith formation commission to discuss some of the highlights from this past year that will set the stage for the commission's aspirations for the coming year's activities.

This past year, faith formation provided opportunities for adult education throughout the year, K-6 education through the Godly Play program, and confirmation classes for middle school students. We also sent teens on a Washington DC mission trip and local activities, and helped children and families enjoy summer camp. Highlights of these activities include presentations by church members David Hogrefe and Brian Kemp about how they turned a hateful situation into an outreach opportunity for love and education about LGBTQ issues, as well as presentations from outside groups such as Equality Ohio and Kaleidoscope during Pride month. The DC mission trip was the first of its kind since before covid and provided our youth the opportunity to serve the unhoused and food insecure in urban DC while building on their faith and friendships. The church sent individual campers to Camp Christian and families to Camp Akita this summer and provided many outreach programs through First Serves. These are just some of the many activities and opportunities the commission planned and funded this year.

Having mentioned a few of the events faith formation took part in last year, what are we planning for the coming year of 2027? We would like to build on the experiences from the mission trip by taking more students and provide rich experiences by going further afield to a native American reservation or other location in need. We'd also like to provide camp experiences for more children. To help make this happen, a large item on the wish list the commission plans to send to church council will be to increase the hours of the interim faith formation director from 20 hours to 30 hours for planning and implementation of these projects. Though we would like to make this a full-time staff position, the commission understands there might not be enough money in the budget to make it full time. We also wish to expand youth activities to build bonds between the youth currently in confirmation and youth group.

On the aspirational wish list, and as there was before covid, faith formation would like to have a series of activities and classes about social justice and community issues as well as classes about spiritual issues or a bible study. Though these parallel tracks have been held during the 10 a.m. hour on Sundays, we could move these offerings outside of this timeslot to help strengthen bonds of friendship and allow more time for learning and discussion. Some coming attractions are the UCC101 lunch & learns during October with Rev. Dr. Nancy Livingston and Rev. Dr. Marti Baumer, and "How your vote affects health care in Ohio" with Dr. Cami Curren. We would welcome input from the congregation about topics and presenters for future series.

To conclude, the faith formation commission aspires to provide more building blocks for adult and youth spiritual development and issues of current interest and focusing on issues of social justice and civil discourse. By putting some of our aspirational wants out there, we can move the needle and accomplish those wants during this transitional time.

Thoughts on Gratitude

"Even in pain, we can find a place of gratitude, a place where alongside the agony of loss we still count and appreciate what remains."

Brian D. McLaren

UCC 101

with Rev. Drs. Livingston and Baumer
Sundays, October 4, 11, and 18
in Parish Hall at 12:15 p.m.

What does it mean to be UCC?

First Church is a member congregation of the United Church of Christ (UCC). All First Church members are, therefore, also members of the UCC. What does that mean? What difference does that make? How did that happen? What is the United Church of Christ, anyway? How does that affect me?

These and other questions will be front and center this fall as a three week “short course” in the history, polity, and theology of the United Church of Christ. The sessions will be led by the Rev. Dr. Nancy Livingston and Rev. Dr. Marti Baumer, both of whom have many years of involvement in the UCC at all levels – local, association, conference, and national. Marti has also taught UCC history, theology, and polity for local churches, conferences, and seminaries, most recently at the Methodist Theological Seminary in Delaware this past spring.

Come for an informal time of conversation and discovery, Sundays, 12:15–1:30 p.m., in Parish Hall, with lunch. Please register on Realm for each date you plan to attend so we have a head count for lunch and seating.

Register for October 4



Register for October 11

Register for October 18



Book Club

Wednesday, October 1, at 7 p.m.
on Zoom

Come enjoy lively conversation and get to know other church members at the First Church Book Club as we discuss *Buckeye* by Patrick Ryan (set in Ohio) on Zoom.

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

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!

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, Denise Vogt, 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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