

GABRIEL'S HORN

First Congregational United Church of Christ

October 2020



Beloved Community,

Grace and peace to you from the God who provides, in this season when peace seems difficult to find. We have passed the six month mark of observing physical distancing in all the ministries of our church, and perhaps you may feel what's been called "the six month wall," an exhaustion or despair that can make it difficult to resonate with our fall theme of *Wonder & Gratitude*. If that's the case, know that you are not alone. We have held so much together, and now we know we are not yet nearing the end of our wilderness journey. We miss the ability to embrace one another, to drink in familiar faces, to feel the resonance of the organ in the sanctuary. We long to share food and conversation in fellowship, witnessing our children and youth grow through another season. Ahead looms an election fraught with uncertainty and a holiday season that may be lonely for many. Amidst it all, I hope you feel the web of prayer and love that holds us together, and the grace of God which holds all things together. Gratitude, after all, is a spiritual practice more than a fleeting feeling. It is a muscle made stronger by difficult times.

Last week the Central Atlantic Conference of the United Church of Christ held its annual meeting virtually, focused on the theme "I love to tell the story." Featured guest, the Rev. Courtney Stange-Tregear, preached and taught about a ministry of storytelling. In her ministry, she discovered that church vitality is linked directly to the strength and depth of relationships. Telling our own stories—stories which are true, significant, and include an aspect of vulnerability—can strengthen the fabric of the congregation. Rev. Stange-Tregear said, "The more we practice listening to stories, the better we are able to hear."

First Church already possesses a tradition of telling stories, through authentic liturgy, nurtures that feature personal reflection, and heartfelt sharing. Yet as we prioritize "strengthening our church community" as one of our goals for this designated ministry time, I call on us to be even more intentional about telling our stories. This month, my heart overflows with gratitude that we will offer rich opportunities for connection, opportunities that make the most of virtual gatherings which allow us to reach beyond one geographic space.

The month begins with a powerful World Communion Service weaving together 15 congregations in the Potomac Association in prayer, word, song, and communion liturgy. You will have the opportunity to experience many worship and music styles and hear voices from some of our sibling congregations who you may already know. Amidst our diversity, we find unity at the table of Jesus Christ. Then on October 11 we invite you to a congregation-wide sacred conversation on racism led by the Rev. Kris Watson.

White privilege discussions will begin on October 14, and on October 18 the Rev. Dr. Ron Hopson will launch a Sunday Bible study called "The Prophets for Perilous Times." Our stewardship season will begin this month with personal stories shared in worship about how First Church is transforming lives and meeting us in this moment. Meanwhile, our Theology Book Group, Young Adult Group, Youth Group, and three small groups continue to share insights and strengthen relationships. At the end of the month we will enjoy a sermon from the Rev. Carolyn Boyd, another outstanding guest preacher.

I hope you will show up in several of these virtual spaces and open your heart to telling your story and listening for the sound of the genuine in the stories of others. I trust that wonder and gratitude will rise like prayers when we do, so that we give thanks to the God who is our constant companion on this journey.

In Gratitude,
Amanda



World Communion Sunday with the Potomac Association: Combined Service on Sunday, October 4

Over a dozen UCC congregations in the Potomac Association have collaborated to create this beautiful service celebrating the extravagant welcome of the table of Jesus Christ on World Communion Sunday. The Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, Associate General Minister and Co-Executive for Global Ministries of the UCC, will serve as our guest preacher. Please note that this service is pre-recorded; we will gather by Zoom at 10:30 as usual and Rev. Sam will offer words of welcome before the service begins; other congregations will also share the pre-recorded service through their own platforms at their own times of worship. Look for Rev. Amanda co-leading the invocation with Rev. Brandon Harris of Peoples' Congregational UCC and also in the communion liturgy. Listen for the voices of our choir mingling with voices of choir members from other congregations. Please take the time before the service begins to set your own table with the sacred elements of bread and cup. As you will witness breads from all over the world in the communion liturgy, we invite you to consider placing bread from a part of the world that is close to your heart on your own table.



Reclaim Our Vote Campaign Claims First Church Commitment

On September 5, a hearty team from First Church finished our sprint to send 1250 hand-written, hand-addressed postcards to voters in Texas through the *Reclaim Our Vote Campaign*, a non-partisan effort sponsored by the Central Atlantic Conference to urge those in areas experiencing voter suppression with a spotty voting record to VOTE. With Hope UCC donating the postcard stock, our team grew to include, among others Lois Fischbeck, Lindsay Swisher, Alison Truhlar and Emily Laing, Michael Hopkins, Abigail Cipparone, Susan Anderson, the Tanaka-Dodge family, Dale Ostrander and Meg Maguire. Rev. Sam, Susan Goodman, and Joan King recruited friends and neighbors to help them meet the deadline. The *PPP Prize* (postcard productivity performance) goes to Heather Goetsch who hand wrote and mailed 200 postcards. What a great effort by an outstanding group!

Church Council

Council Capsule for September

The First Church Council met on September 1, 2020. Designated senior minister, Rev. Amanda Hendler-Voss, expressed thank you to all responsible for August church highlights and upcoming fall events:

- The well-attended, fun intergenerational Mystery Night organized by Kristy Goodfellow and Care of the Parish Commission.
- Four new church members!
- Comprehensive planning meeting on dismantling racism produced a road map for the coming year.
- Rich conversation on the summer all-church book read Tai Nehisi Coates *Between the World and Me*.
- Healing conversation for members of color with Rev. Ron Hopson.
- "Unraveled," the rich summer worship theme, guided worship in many directions.
- Post-carding with the Central Atlantic Conference, and phone-banking to come.
- Gratitude is the fall worship theme.
- The virtual DC Interfaith Council Unity Walk: Hannah Long-Higgins and Meg Maguire prepared a video about First Church for the walk, and for the church website.
- John Horman, Rev. Amanda and others will live-stream from the sanctuary beginning in September. Contact Amanda to sign up to be a liturgist.
- Sign up for a one-on-one meeting with Rev. Amanda

Associate Minister, Rev. Sam McFerran reported highlights:

- Great News! First Church received a \$500 grant from the Potomac Association for a six-week exploration of Social Justice taught by the leaders of The Center, a progressive faith based non-profit committed toward justice formation for youth and building strong and just communities in Baltimore
- Lower elementary learned from Mr. Rogers "Who is my neighbor?" curriculum at Compassion Camp.
- Adults shared in two nurtures, and a sermon talkback with Ron Hopson.
- Jasmine Martie of Simply Smiles Cheyenne people on Lakota reservation preached on Labor Day Sunday and led a nurture conversation after the service
- On Mondays 6-10 young adults meet for meaningful conversation and sharing ways to serve the church and the community.

Kim Darling, Moderator, asks for volunteers for the Nominating Committee, a November-December effort to prepare a slate of officers for 2021.

Kim Darling reported on the Budget Committee formed to receive and process requests from commissions, officers and staff, to find ways to better tie our budget to our mission, and to consider issues of long-term sustainability. The Budget committee includes Kim Darling, chair, Lucille Dickinson, Nora Marsh, Meg Maguire, Scott Day, and John Smeltzer. Budget requests were due to the committee

by September 18 so that an asking budget will be ready for the October 6 Council meeting, for approval at the fall congregational meeting in November, and in time for the 2021 stewardship campaign.

Council has been busy. It has received, initiated conversation, and will address in October a number of recommendations which will be presented to the congregation at the fall congregational meeting:

- Enhancements to all church communication from Rev. Amanda with Outreach and Membership Commission.
- Social advocacy policy to guide church communication with public officials and other organizations from the social Action and Advocacy Commission.
- Updated, expanded commission charter from the Christian Education Commission.
- Observations and recommendations for First Church governance from the Governance Taskforce.

The next Church Council meeting is Tuesday, October 6, 2020

Prepared by Gail Sonnemann, Clerk

Action Item Summary as of September 1, 2020

#	Action Item	Person Responsible	Assigned	Expected	Status
30	Find Best Building Insurance option	Gail Sonnemann to ask status from John Marsh Facilities Commission	8/6/2019	OCT Council	Open
65	CE Charter to include Young Adults	Mark Jensen send updated charter to Council and congregational approval	2/11/2020	SEP Council	Closed
79	Explain Contract Musicians budget	Diane Brenneman Worship Commission, From annual meeting	1/26/2020	OCT Council	Closed
90	How do we convey support letters to the Mayor, Council, etc.?	John Smeltzer and SAAC draft a policy	6/9/2020	SEP Council	Closed
94	2021 Budget requests	Commission chairs give 2021 budget requests to Budget committee	8/4/2020	SEPT 18, 2020	Closed
95	Commission vacancies in 2021	Commission chair provide 2021 commission vacancy numbers to Kim Darling	8/4/2020	SEPT Council	Closed
96	Two Church listservs proposal	Ann Bushmiller bring O&M Commission listserv recommendations to Council	9/1/2020	OCT Council	Open
97	Church Governance Report	Kim Darling send to Council; council members read for October approval	9/1/2020	OCT Council	Open
98	Social Action Advocacy Policy Statement	John Smeltzer SAAC Commission prepare addendum with parties affected and responsible within First Church	9/1/2020	OCT Council	Open

Advent Olive Oil Sales

Advance notice on sales during Advent to support the Olive Oil Ministry and Palestinian charities and organizations: Look for details in the November Horn about the sale of olive oil and other Palestinian products during advent. The selling prices will again be \$20 per bottle and \$30 for the one-liter tins. There will be Jenin, Nabali, and Rumi olive oil in bottles and the one-liter Jenin tins in stock. If there is demand, the \$6 olive oil-based soap, tapenade, and zaatar will be available (but not the \$5 soap from Zabadeh or the Palestinian cookbooks).

October Second Sunday Offering: UCC's Neighbors in Need



On October 11, the Second Sunday offering will be dedicated to the UCC's Neighbors in Need. Neighbors in Need (NIN) is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. On average, this vital offering annually collects around \$1 million. One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). Two-thirds of this offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants.

Not only are NIN funds shared with CAIM, they are utilized by staff to develop curated and created social justice resources, i.e. webinars, bible studies, curriculums, advocacy tools, etc. within the program areas of environmental justice, racial justice, LGBTQ justice, economic justice, women's justice, immigration justice, and more.

Additionally, a portion of the monies collected are used to fund [NIN grants](#). Neighbors in Need grants are awarded to UCC churches and organizations doing justice work in their communities. These grants fund projects whose work ranges from direct service to community organizing and advocacy to address systemic injustice. This year, special consideration will be given to projects focusing on serving our immigrant neighbors and communities.

Please give generously. Following are some NIN stories:



Houston teens learn wage activism from working adults like them. This summer, with a grant from the United Church of Christ's [Neighbors in Need](#) offering, 24 high school students from an economically challenged Houston neighborhood learned about activism and carried out a local campaign for a \$15 minimum-wage law.

The idea came from the basic insight that many Houston residents find it hard to make ends meet, especially workers in fast-food and other service industries. The Rev. Darnell Fennell serves some of those people in both his callings. He is pastor of [Just Love Church](#), affiliated with the UCC and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). He also teaches high school social studies.

With a background in community organizing, Fennell knows people don't have to sit still for economic injustice. He knows the wider UCC feels the same, as seen in statements such as a 2017 General Synod [resolution](#), "A More Just Economy: \$15 Minimum Wage, Living Wages and Job Creation." So he sought the NIN grant to introduce young people to local activists in the national [Fight for \\$15](#) wage campaign and involve them in learning by doing.

[Read more via UC news](#)



Hope Station Nogales to provide reverse sanctuary to deportees in Mexico. A United Church of Christ sanctuary church offering immigrants refuge in the Arizona borderlands will soon be offering a place of hospitality, support, and hope on the Mexican side of the border for people who find themselves deported from the United States. The Shadow Rock UCC Sanctuary Action Team and the Rev. Ken Heintzelman, in an extension of the spirit and intent of their ministry of sanctuary in Phoenix, are in the process of establishing Hope Station Nogales, in Sonora, Mexico.

The thought is Hope Station, which was funded in part by a \$10,000 grant from Neighbors in Need, can be a place of transition, a place where people who are deported but have family in the U.S. can find a meal, safe lodging and assistance.

[Read more via UC News](#)

A Tiny House aims to provide big solutions for South Carolina LGBTQ community.

When LGBTQ individuals near the campus of Clemson University, in the areas of upstate South Carolina unexpectedly find themselves without a home or a place to feel safe, Peace Congregational United Church of Christ will be ready to meet them.

Congregation members and the Clemson community are working side-by-side in the design and construction of a tiny house, a mobile residency for a person in the LGBTQ community who is no longer welcome at home. The \$20,000 project is in progress with the help of a \$10,000 Grasstop Grant from UCC Justice and Witness Ministries. The first occupant could be ready to find refuge there in January.

[Read more via UC News](#)



White Privilege: Let's Talk Discussion Series

Six Wednesdays: October 14, 21, 28, November 4, 11, 18
7:00-8:30 PM on Zoom

As we prepare for the fall *White Privilege: Let's Talk* discussion series, several alums from the prior three years' discussions offer the following statements about what that experience has meant to them. Please let one of us know if you want to join the next series or have questions.

"Part of white privilege is the convenience of rarely having to think about race. The discussion series provided me with lots of examples of white privilege, and an increased awareness of how I benefit from my skin color for no good reason." -- Mike Zawada

"My self-image was that I was very anti-racist because I had attended demonstrations, spoken out in situations, etc. However, the white privilege class showed me ways I was using my privileges, and had been, without recognizing what I was doing." -- Susan Goodman

"Reflecting with others on systematic racism and how we have unconsciously participated in it has helped me to recognize and resist it, rather than feeling guilty." -- Peter Byrne

"The discussion group allowed us to examine these issues in a very candid and non-judgmental way. Since participating in the group, I have certainly become more aware of how white privilege manifests itself in my daily life. There are no easy answers to this problem. However, the group led me to be more mindful of this issue in my interactions with others and made me a better listener when discussing racial justice questions with my friends and colleagues." -- Peter Tracey

"Being part of the White Privilege discussion series has had a profound and positive impact on my life. It opened my eyes to seeing how pervasive racism is in my everyday life. I now speak out about racist acts when I see them." -- Mary Alice Ball

"The white privilege group gave me a new level of awareness of the prevalence of white privilege and the big part it plays in racism. These discussions are a very important part of our anti-racism effort, and I'm very glad I participated in it." -- Joan King

We will use (with creative modifications) the UCC curriculum, "White Privilege: Let's Talk"; <http://privilege.uccpages.org/>.

Rev. Laura Johnson, johnson.laurad@gmail.com, 860-508-3592

Rev. Karen Byrne, revkarenbyrne@gmail.com, 202-365-0017

Sacred Conversations to End Racism: October 11 or 14

Join Rev. Amanda and Rev. Kris Watson, both part of the first cohort of trained and vetted Sacred Conversations facilitators in the UCC, for a congregation-wide discussion on the docuseries "Race: The Power of an Illusion" (episodes 1 & 2). Please RSVP to Rev. Amanda at ahendlervoss@gmail.com for either the Sunday, October 11 session from 11:35 AM-1:05 PM or the Wednesday, October 14 session from 6:30-8:00 PM. Both sessions will cover the same ground, but we need to know if the October 14 session is needed or if everyone plans to attend on October 11. In preparation for the conversations, please watch [episode 1](#) and [episode 2](#) of "Race: The Power of an Illusion."

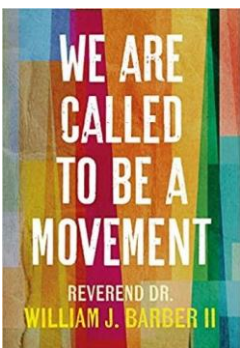


Rev. Kris Watson is one of only nine nationally certified trainers in the Sacred Conversations to End Racism curriculum of the United Church of Christ, training multiple clergy and lay people nationally in the important work to dismantle white supremacy. Rev. Kris currently serves as an Associate Minister of Education at Safe Haven UCC in Ridgewood, NY. She also serves as the Chair of the Committee on Ministry of the Metropolitan Association of the NY Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Rev. Kris is a graduate of Vassar College, and the Fordham University School of Law where she obtained her B.A. and Doctor of Juris Prudence degrees. She served as an Assistant District Attorney in the New York County District Attorney's Office for several years before entering the private practice of law. In addition to the practice of law, she has been an advisor or executive at several non-profit organizations, including Truth and Conciliation and JasD'Jor: Emerging Philanthropists. Rev. Kris has served as an organizational consultant, training consultant, change manager and advisor to the City of San Francisco, and numerous non-profit organizations and governmental agencies nationally. In 2013 Rev. Kris graduated from the New York Theological Seminary with her Master of Divinity.

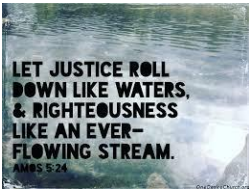
Medical Debt Paid Off for Neighbors

Together with seven other DC-based UCC congregations and the Potomac Association Justice Committee, we raised \$65,522.61 to help relieve medical debt! This translates to approximately \$6.5 million of medical debt paid for our neighbors. Praise God! Thank you to all the generous, faithful souls who gave to this effort and to all who participated in the joint worship service last spring. We are grateful. Please stay tuned for details about further celebration and press coverage of this ministry.



Theology Book Group: Wednesday, October 7

The Theology Book Group meets next on Wednesday, October 7 to discuss an important sermon by Rev. William Barber II, The Call to Movement. This short but powerful call to Christian action on behalf of the poor provides a good warm-up for the election. You can read the book and/or view the sermon itself, delivered at Washington National Cathedral in 2018 <https://cathedral.org/sermons/sermon-the-rev-dr-william-j-barber-ii/>. The link to the discussion is <https://georgetown.zoom.us/j/2023655260>. All are welcome.



The Prophets for Perilous Times

Four lessons:

October 18, 25; November 8,15, 2020

11:40 am– 12:40 or 1:00 pm

Engaging the current crises of COVID-19 and Racism in light of some of the prophets of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. Principal resource will be the Bible. Additional resources from Biblical scholarship as well as contemporary writing on social justice also will be utilized.

The purpose of the course is to inform and empower participants to advance the cause of health, safety, justice and equality for all persons and particularly for persons of traditionally marginalized and stigmatized groups.

The course will engage a religious community around the current crises in America. We will invite consideration of short texts from the prophets in light of the current social and political realities in our country. The study leader(s) will offer informed interpretation of the scriptures and suggest possibilities for application of the insights gained from the study discussion, to our individual lives and to the public square.

Leader: Rev. Ron Hopson

Connect with Rev. Amanda This Fall

[Click here](#) to sign up to connect with Rev. Amanda this fall by phone, Zoom, or (on Friday mornings only) at the church (please note that physical distancing will be observed and masks will be worn by all). If none of these dates work for you but you would still like to connect, there is a space at the bottom of the sign-up sheet to indicate that and Rev. Amanda will be in touch with you to find a time that works. These one-hour meetings may include pastoral care, a time to better get to know each other, and an opportunity to catch up and share from the heart.

Help Us Lead Worship This Fall

We have transitioned to streaming from the sanctuary and there are three ways you can serve as a liturgist or scripture reader this fall: submit a pre-recorded video of yourself, participate by Zoom from home, or join the small crew streaming live from the sanctuary while following our guidelines for safety. [Click here](#) to sign up to serve as a liturgist or scripture reader this fall. We are so grateful for your voice!



OUR FAITH, OUR VOTE 2020

LAST CHANCE TO REGISTER!!!

Now is the time to get your vote on! Are you ready?

VA started early voting September 18!

MD starts early voting October 26.

DC starts early voting October 27.



STEP ONE:

- Are you registered to vote? Don't know? [Click here](#) to find out now.
- You must register to vote by October 13.

STEP TWO:

- Will you vote by mail? If you are already registered to vote:
 - DC will automatically send you a ballot the first week of October
 - MD will automatically send you a request for a ballot to fill out and return no later than October 20.
 - you must request an absentee ballot in VA by 10/23/20

Carefully complete your ballot as soon as you receive it. Some ballots require your signature on an outer mailing envelope AND an inner ballot envelope. Follow the instructions. Failure to do so may require the election board to not count your ballot! All three jurisdictions are providing postage free return envelopes.

Put your ballot in the regular mail OR in an election drop box near you that each of the three jurisdictions are providing for this election. Go to your jurisdiction's official website or call to find the location of a drop box near you.

STEP THREE:

- Already registered and ready to vote in-person? Where will you vote? Some of the familiar polling places have changed locations due to the corona virus in order to provide appropriate social distancing for in-person voters. Check your jurisdiction's website to get the correct list of polling places.

Official websites for DMV voting questions:

WWW.DCBOE.ORG (202)727-2525

WWW.ELECTIONS.MARYLAND.GOV (800)222-8683

WWW.ELECTIONS.VIRGINIA.GOV (800)552-9745

October Calendar

Sunday, October 4

10:30 am World Communion Sunday
Combined Worship Service

Monday, October 5

8:00 pm Young Adult Group

Tuesday, October 6

6:30 pm Church Council

Wednesday, October 7

12:15 pm Break Away Meditation
6:30 pm Theology Book Group

Thursday, October 8

5:30 pm Finance Commission
7:30 pm Choir Zoom Meeting

Friday, October 9

2:00 pm Hand Chime Rehearsal

Sunday, October 11

10:30 am Worship
11:30 am Sacred Conversations to End Racism
with Kris Watson

Monday, October 12

8:00 pm Young Adult Group

Wednesday, October 14

6:30 pm Sacred Conversations to End Racism
with Kris Watson
7:00 pm White Privilege Discussion Group

Thursday, October 15

7:30 pm Choir Zoom Meeting

Friday, October 16

2:00 pm Hand Chime Rehearsal

Saturday, October 17

Potomac Assoc. Annual Meeting

Sunday, October 18

10:30 am Morning Worship
Stewardship Sunday
11:40 am Prophets for Perilous Times

Monday, October 19

8:00 pm Young Adult Group

Wednesday, October 21

7:00 pm White Privilege Discussion Group

Thursday, October 22

7:30 pm Choir Zoom Meeting

Friday, October 23

2:00 pm Hand Chime Rehearsal

Sunday, October 25

9:30 am Rev. Amanda Listening Session
with children
10:30 am Worship, Guest Preacher
The Rev. Carolyn Boyd
11:40 am Prophets for Perilous Times
7:00 pm Sunday Small Group

Monday, October 26

6:00 pm Monday Small Group
8:00 pm Young Adult Group

Tuesday, October 27

7:00 pm Quarterly Small Group

Wednesday, October 28

6:00 pm Social Action & Awareness Comm.
7:00 pm White Privilege Discussion Group
7:00 pm Quarterly Small Group

Thursday, October 29

7:30 pm Choir Zoom Meeting

Friday, October 30

2:00 pm Hand Chime Rehearsal



When Home is a "Booth in the Desert" Youth Homelessness in DC

Thursday, October 8, 7:00 PM

Sukkot, or the Biblical Festival of Booths, invites us to consider what it would be like if "home" was temporary, without the permanence of four sturdy walls and a roof that doesn't let in rain and wind. As we sit in our own sukkah or that of our synagogue or neighbor, we invite you to meet Sasha Bruce Youthwork, one of the largest and most experienced providers of services to youth in the DC Metro region who are experiencing homelessness.

Learn about ways you can engage in both direct assistance as well as advocacy efforts on behalf of youth experiencing homelessness while exploring the themes of Sukkot and religious imperatives for eradicating homelessness from different faith perspectives. This is an interfaith program and all are welcome!

In partnership with Adas Israel Congregation, Church of the Epiphany, First Congregational UCC, Foundry United Methodist Church, St. Augustine Catholic Church Social Justice Advocacy and Team Hope Ministries, St. Stephen's and the Incarnation, Southeast Tabernacle Church, Temple Emanuel, Temple Micah, Temple Rodef Shalom, and Westmoreland Congregational United Church of Christ.

About Sasha Bruce Youthwork

Established in 1974, Sasha Bruce Youthwork (SBY) is the leading provider of homeless youth services in the DC Region. Through its 21 programs in DC and Prince George's County, MD, SBY works to improve the lives of over 6,500 runaway, homeless, abused, and neglected youth and their families. Learn more at www.sashabruce.org.



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Ministers – Friends & Members of the Church
Designated Senior Minister – Rev. Amanda Hendler-Voss
Associate Minister – Rev. Sam McFerran
Director of Music – Mr. John Horman
Building Manager – Mr. Byron Adams
Administrative Assistant – Ms. Cindy Dobbs
Sexton – Ms. Ines Marquez
Members in Discernment – Dwight Davis, Lynaya Morris

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