

GABRIEL'S HORN

First Congregational United Church of Christ

August 2021



Beloved Community,

Robert Moses, the soft-spoken civil rights activist and organizer of Freedom Summer, died this week at the age of 86. In 1964, our Assistant Minister, the late and beloved Bruce Hanson, was given leave by the congregation to work with Moses to organize trainings for those who would travel south to register voters in Mississippi during Freedom Summer. On Sunday, August 2, 1964, Rev. Hanson had the opportunity to preach about this work at First Church as he organized a training for 40 people who would teach in Mississippi that month. In his sermon, he describes Bob Moses as “a brilliant young man of 29 years, with a Master’s in Philosophy from Harvard... Robert Moses, who has been beaten, who has been shot at, who is a genius in organization and leadership.” Three years prior, voter registration volunteers had been beaten so badly in Macomb, Mississippi, that they withdrew. Bob Moses and his staff made the agonizing decision that summer of 1964 to return with only the most experienced staff. Seven volunteered. Seventy-two hours after their arrival, the home they were staying in was bombed, knocking in one wall. It seemed a miracle that any survived, but the volunteers emerged with cuts, bruises, and one concussion, deeply determined to continue their work. As a bomb squad from the FBI arrived and began to circle the house (after the seven had already gone through the neighborhood, knocking on doors and telling the community they were there to stay) and a crowd began to gather, both black and white, those staff members began to sing a song that Rev. Hanson said was indigenous to the Mississippi movement, called “Ain’t Nobody Gonna Turn Us Around.” They sang away their fear, they sang their way into community. That night they hosted a mass meeting and over two hundred showed up. They opened a freedom school on the front lawn of that bombed out house.

I share this incredible piece of history, in case we need the reminder that life is difficult and extraordinary, full of strife and spirit, and a life of faith necessarily draws us into the struggles of our day. We are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, and we encourage each other to continue the covenant of our church to seek God, grow in faith, embrace spiritual transformation, stand for justice and peace, and strive to heal this broken world.

In these weary days as we face a resurgence of COVID-19 and seek to call a new Director of Music and Administrative Assistant, I have been encouraged too by song. At General Synod we sang old songs, like “Step by Step,” written by Pete Seeger and arranged by Sweet Honey in the Rock. “Step by step the longest march can be won, can be won, many stones can form an arch, singly none, singly none.” As I sat

in front of my computer screen, longing to sing these words with beloved colleagues and our wider family of faith in the United Church of Christ, it was both a moment of dissonance and a moment of profound spiritual connection. We need one another and step by step, we will get there. There were new songs too, such as "One Brick," written by Fran McKendree and Brian McLaren. The chorus sings, "We lay one brick at a time, and we take one step at a time and this revolution of the heart, building a new world, one brick at a time."

In the coming months I hope to share some of these precious songs with you, and even if we are staring at our screens, or swaying our bodies and humming rather than singing in the sanctuary, I hope you will let the music speak deeply to your spirit. Let us lock arms and continue to move, step by step. Let us lean into the labor of love that is our common life together. Let us build a new world one brick at a time. I trust that the fearless courage of Jesus, the compassion of God our Creator, and the power of the Holy Spirit will go with us.

In Peace,
Rev. Amanda



Guest Preacher on August 1: Lynaya Morris

Originally from Pocomoke on Maryland's Eastern Shore Lynaya holds a Master's degree in Higher Education Administration from George Washington University, and a bachelor's degree in biology from Syracuse University. She recently graduated Wesley Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity degree. Lynaya served and lived among students as part of GWU for eight years, as an Area Coordinator, Residence Director, and later a Career Coach. Lynaya currently works at Catholic University as an Academic & Career Advisor but will return to GWU as an Associate Director of Career Coaching this summer. Lynaya enjoys not just science disciplines and theology, but also creative endeavors such as baking, painting, knitting, and listening to music.



Memorial Service for Pat Ashbrook: August 4 at 2:00 PM

Join us in the sanctuary on Wednesday, August 4, at 2:00 PM for a Memorial Service to mourn the loss and celebrate the life of Pat Ashbrook led by the Rev. Sam McFerran with John Horman providing music. [Click here](#) if you prefer to join us by Zoom. A reception hosted by Care of Parish will follow in the Community Room. The reception is being coordinated by Kristy Goodfellow. To read Pat's loving obituary written by her family to honor her life and legacy, [click here](#). Let us continue to hold Pat's family and all who have loved her in our hearts and prayers.

Updates from Council on Staff Transitions

Search for New Director of Music

We celebrated John Horman's retirement from his position as our Director of Music at our worship service on June 27, 2021. John brought enormous talent and enthusiasm to his work, and we will miss him dearly.

Council has appointed a search committee to find a new Director of Music. That committee is now up and running under the leadership of Marian Drake. She is joined by Kristy Goodfellow Mills, Andrew Hamilton, Michael Hopkins, Emily Laing, Priscilla Waters, and Jason Carson Wilson. Jo-Anne Henry is also assisting the committee with its initial work of implicit bias training and preparation of a position description and announcement. We thank each of them for their service on this important committee.

The committee hopes to begin reviewing resumes and interviewing candidates in September, with a goal of selecting a new music director by Thanksgiving. But we intend to be deliberate, to maximize our chances of attracting high-quality candidates and securing the best person for the position. In accordance with our bylaws, the committee will ultimately bring a candidate to the congregation for the congregation's approval. Depending on timing and on the committee's recommendation, Council may hire a candidate on a temporary basis, to fill the vacancy prior to a scheduled congregational meeting. Until a new director of music is hired, we will rely on a quality pool of substitute musicians.

If you have ideas or suggestions for the committee, please feel free to contact Marian at mariandrake@yahoo.com.

Thank you to Cindy Dobbs and Search for a New Administrative Assistant

We also ask you to please join us in offering a tremendous thank you to Cindy Dobbs and wishing her well as she prepares to leave her position as our administrative assistant. Cindy recently announced her decision to depart the church, effective August 27, 2021, for personal and family reasons.

Since joining us in 2015, Cindy has worked diligently behind the scenes of our collective gatherings. Her hands are on the bulletins we use at worship, the annual reports and other documents we share at meetings, and the weekly newsletter and Gabriel's Horn we read to learn the important news of the church. During pre-pandemic times, she was the face of the church to visitors on weekdays. And she served a critical role in maintaining the continuity of the office during times of staff transitions and recently through the COVID-19 pandemic. She also blessed us, on occasion, as a guest pianist at our worship services. For all of these contributions and more, we are very grateful. We will miss her, and we wish her the very best as she transitions to a new chapter in her life.

Council has advertised a job opening for the administrative assistant position (which is also posted on our website: [click here](#)). We have appointed a hiring committee to interview candidates, with the goal of filling the position before Cindy departs, so that she may help with the transition. In accordance with

our personnel manual, the position is open to non-members only. If you know of persons who might be interested in the position, please direct them to our website <http://www.firstuccdc.org>. We thank Lucille Dickinson (chair), Peter Tracey, Allison Truhlar, and Alyx Cheng for agreeing to serve on this important committee, in close consultation with Rev. Amanda.

Call to Permanent Ministry

Finally, Council is pleased to announce a process for calling the Reverend Amanda Hendler-Voss to be our permanent senior minister. We hired Amanda in March 2020, with the assistance of the Central Atlantic Conference, to be our designated senior minister. A designated minister, like an interim, is intentionally term limited. But unlike an interim, a designated minister can be called to permanent ministry within the designated ministry term after one year of service.

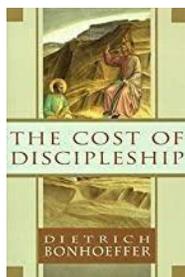
Amanda's designated ministry (now nearing a year and a half) has been like none other. Just before her official start date, the global pandemic hit, throwing all of our operations (including our designated ministry plans) into turmoil. Amanda was immediately confronted with leading us through a series of ever shifting challenges none of us had anticipated. She has been improvising (beautifully) since day one. Now that pandemic restrictions have eased and Amanda has had the opportunity to actually meet many of us in person and to get a glimpse of a return to regular worship at 10th and G, we are in position to transition to a new covenant and permanent call. We anticipate a three-part process: (1) an evaluation of the interim ministry in relation to the original interim ministry goals and changed circumstances to be led by the Designated Minister Relations Team with input from the congregation; (2) a series of sacred conversations with Amanda, including an all-church hearing (or nurture), about her vision for the future ministry of the church and our hopes for such ministry; and (3) a vote on a permanent call at the fall congregational meeting on October 24, 2021. We will announce additional details on this process later.

In the meantime, if you have any questions about any staff transition issues, please do not hesitate to contact us.

John Smeltzer, Moderator
johnsmeltzer@gmail.com

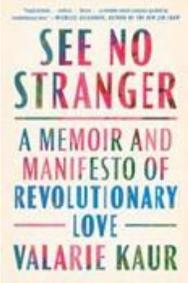
Susan Anderson, Assistant Moderator
ssba92@gmail.com

Christian Education Commission



Theology Book Group: September 7

The Theology Book Group meets next on September 7, at 7:00 PM, to discuss Dietrich Bonhoeffer's classic and ever relevant, *The Cost of Discipleship*. The meeting will be held on Zoom: <https://georgetown.zoom.us/j/93643277834>. All are welcome.



All-Church Summer Book Read: *See No Stranger* by Valerie Kaur

This year's selection is *See No Stranger* by Valerie Kaur. Valerie is a Sikh activist, filmmaker, and civil rights lawyer. In this memoir/manifesto, Valerie shares her personal experiences confronting racism, sexual assault, and police violence and her vision for a revolutionary love that can transform and heal our personal relationships, our communities, and nation.

Summer Read Book Discussion

Join us by Zoom following the worship service on August 29 as we discuss our congregational summer read, *See No Stranger*, by Valerie Kaur. If you are in need of a book, please contact Rev. Amanda who has an extra book to share (donated by Jamey Moore). We hope you will join us for a deeper dive into this profound book.

Outreach & Membership Commission

Wanted: Ushers!

Perks:

Access, access, access - to the "brick-and-mortar" version of church
Seeing fellow members and friends in person
The fun of directing crowds (sizes may vary)
Checklists - who doesn't love a good checklist
Some semblance of what was and what will be
Not Zoom



Downside:

Pajamas discouraged (slippers optional)

If interested, please contact one of these folks:

Matt LaGamma (matthewlagamma@gmail.com | 703-309-4685)

Mike Zawada (michael.zawada@gmail.com | 812-287-2666)

Ellen Bushmiller (bshmlr@yahoo.com | 703-785-0531)

Thanks,

Outreach and Membership Commission

News from Church Member Cindy Mazur

Dear All: I have some news. I have accepted a job as the Ombuds at the Los Alamos National Labs in New Mexico. The Lab is run by contractors for the Department of Energy. So, I am retiring at the end of July after 30 years at FEMA. My partner, Ken, and I will be moving out there in August. They offered me a nice relocation package. First Church has been an amazing part of my life. Thank you all for your spectacular contributions to my spiritual journey! Please stay in touch and come visit! Cindy Mazur

Care of Parish Commission

Summer Fun at Yard's Park on August 21

Join us on August 21 for summer fun at Yard's Park. Come meet Rev. Amanda in person from 10:00 AM through noon on Saturday, August 21, at Yards Park. Yards Park is located at 355 Water Street SE, Washington DC. We will meet on the west bank of the water feature. Consider packing swim clothes if you want to splash around and walking shoes to go for a stroll on the boardwalk. For more information about Yards Park, including parking options, please check out their website: <https://www.capitolriverfront.org/yards-park/faqs>. We look forward to seeing you there. Please contact Kristy Goodfellow Mills with questions at kristy.a.goodfellow@gmail.com or 563.580.5558.

Social Action & Awareness Commission

Inviting Our Neighbors In

The Drop-In Center for homeless youth that First Church offers in partnership with Sasha Bruce Youthworks is moving to the next phase of reopening! Starting in August, we will invite people to come inside to get a boxed meal. While we won't yet have full evenings of gathering and movie watching inside, this is a big step toward returning to more engaged fellowship with our neighbors. Also, it's moving to Tuesday nights.

There will be a training in September for interested volunteers, so if you can come on Tuesdays, or if you simply want to learn more about homeless youth in DC, Sasha Bruce, and ways to participate via First Church, contact Janneke Ratcliffe at janneke1018@gmail.com.

A super special shout out to all the volunteers who have braved cold winter nights, sweltering summer evenings, and a pandemic to stand outside on the corner of 10th and G, passing out supplies and truly being present in the neighborhood.

The mission of Sasha Bruce Youthworks is to improve the lives of runaway, homeless, abused and neglected at-risk youth and their families in the Washington area. Learn more about how else you can help at sashabruce.org.

Cancel Rent DC

Cancel Rent DC is a coalition of 12 community organizations united to prevent mass eviction and displacement of long-time residents from the District, especially Black and Brown residents, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Cancel Rent DC advocates for no evictions and no debt accrual for tenants due to the pandemic, for landlords to be reimbursed via local and federal funds, and for landlords to bear the burden of applying for relief instead of tenants.

There will be a candlelight vigil at the fountain in Dupont Circle on August 4 at 7:00 PM, after which the group will march to DC Councilmember Brooke Pinto's house to demand that she support Cancel Rent DC. Sign up on the Cancel Rent DC website (cancelrentdc.org) for more details.



August Second Sunday Offering on August 8: AMOS Health and Hope

By Jamey Moore

Our August Second Sunday offering is dedicated to AMOS Health and Hope. AMOS stands for A Ministry of Sharing Health and Hope and is also named for the Hebrew prophet. Amos was a farmer who spoke out against the injustices of his time. His

message about justice flowing everywhere is still relevant today.

I first heard about AMOS from our guest preacher, Felicia Zamora. The dream for AMOS began in 1967 with the work of Dr. Gustavo Parajón, a physician, medical missionary and American Baptist pastor. Faced with overwhelming need in the poorest rural villages, Dr. Parajón frequently remarked:

“In Nicaragua, a doctor shouldn’t just be a doctor; a doctor must also be a teacher.”

This vision for empowerment gave birth to an integral health care initiative devoted to local leadership development. The heart of Dr. Parajón’s work focused on communities themselves, teaching local people to provide basic primary health care services, thereby dramatically reducing unnecessary illness and death. This focus on strengthening communities through education and preventive care lives on in AMOS today.

Through a community-based model, AMOS trains and empowers health promoters in rural areas to identify and treat common illnesses, right in their own villages. And at their community clinics in vulnerable neighborhoods of Managua, AMOS provides quality primary health care services to people who would otherwise be unable to afford them.

No person should die from a preventable cause. People who live in extremely remote rural areas or in underserved urban neighborhoods deserve the same access to health care as people who live closer to health care facilities or who have greater access to resources. So please give generously to this worthy cause. For more information check out their website: www.amoshealth.org

UCC Synod Confronted Truths, Celebrated Heroes

Our denomination held its 33rd General Synod last week—from July 11 through 18. Action included re-electing the Rev. Traci Blackmon as Associate General Minister for Justice & Witness and Local Church Ministries and, of course, passing resolutions. The journey to passage of four resolutions in particular forced delegates to confront and discuss some hard truths. Those resolutions included:

- A resolution to declare racism a public health crisis
- A resolution to ban conversion therapy
- A resolution denouncing Israel’s aggression against Palestine
- A resolution declaring an end to the war between Hawai’i and the United States

Delegates approved the first resolution as part of its first orders of business on July 11. The resolution highlighted inequities people of color face throughout society. COREM moderator, Zillah Jackson Wesley, Sr., noted one such inequity in a [UCC news story](#).

“For decades, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ has advocated for health care as a right and priority for all people and for a commitment to be an anti-racist church,” Wesley said.

A resolution declaring an end of the war between Hawai’i and the United States faced an uphill battle. It initially failed because buy-in from the indigenous Hawaiian UCC community hadn’t been sought earlier in the week. Organizing and procedural maneuvering got it passed in the nick of time on Sunday.

The latter resolution inspired so much passion that a delegate compelled to interrupt a conversion therapy survivor as the resolution to ban conversion therapy discussed. That resolution was handily approved.

Approving the resolution to denounce the Israeli government’s treatment of Palestinians sparked a necessary word usage debate. Resolution committee members stripped the word *apartheid* from the document. California delegate, Rev. David Grishaw-Jones, began the push to keep it in.

Grishaw-Jones and others also pushed to name the actions a sin. An Illinois South delegate claimed declaring anything a sin was *inappropriate*. The resolution, with the language added, passed after lively debate.

Other Synod activities included events held by Ministers for Racial, Social, and Economic Justice (MRSEJ) and the Council of Racial & Ethnic Ministries (COREM).

MRSEJ, along other historically underrepresented groups including, United Black Christians, Council of American Indian Ministries, United Samoan Ministries, Colectivo de UCC Latinx Ministries, and Pacific Islander & Asian-American Ministries make up COREM. Serving as MRESJ vice president gives me the privilege to serve on COREM’s executive board.

MRSEJ’s Synod event highlighted a *Black Church & Sexuality* curriculum, which the Rev. Dr. Paula Hall (her brainchild), the Rev. Sherry Davis Mollock, and the Rev. Ron Hopson were presented with Trail Blazer Awards.

MRSEJ also honored Rev. Dr. Vertie Powers, retired Chicago Metropolitan Association Conference Minister of the Illinois Conference, with an Unsung Hero Award. Powers’ impact on this denomination includes paving the way for Rev. Amanda and me. COREM’s event highlighted all the partner ministries and featured a great sermon by Rev. Hector Lopez.

Other highlights include the Rev. Linda Jaramillo, former Justice & Witness Executive minister and current Colectivo convener; and Rev. Dr. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, Chicago Theological Seminary president emerita, winning Antoinette Brown awards.

Rev. Jason Carson Wilson

August Calendar

Sunday, August 1

10:30 am Worship
11:40 am Coffee Hour

Monday, August 2

6:30 pm Sanctuary Group
7:30 pm Care of Parish Commission
7:30 pm Christian Ed. Commission
7:30 pm Finance Commission
8:00 pm Young Adult Group

Wednesday, August 4

12:15 pm Break Away Meditation
2:00 pm Pat Ashbrook Memorial Service

Sunday, August 8

10:30 am Worship
11:40 am Coffee Hour

Monday, August 9

8:00 pm Young Adult Group

Tuesday, August 10

6:00 pm Worship Commission

Wednesday, August 11

12:15 pm Break Away Meditation
7:00 pm Wednesday Monthly Small Group

Sunday, August 15

10:30 am Worship
11:40 am Coffee Hour

Monday, August 16

8:00 pm Young Adult Group

Tuesday, August 17

7:00 pm Outreach & Membership
7:30 pm Facilities Commission

Wednesday, August 18

12:15 pm Break Away Meditation
7:30 pm Social Action Commission

Sunday, August 22

10:30 am Worship
11:40 am Coffee Hour

Monday, August 23

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

Tuesday, August 24

Gabriel's Horn Deadline

Wednesday, August 25

12:15 pm Break Away Meditation

Sunday, August 29

10:30 am Worship
11:40 am Summer Read Book Discussion

Monday, August 30

8:00 pm Young Adult Group



**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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

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