

GABRIEL'S HORN

First Congregational United Church of Christ

September 2021



[Click here](#) to view last month's

Beloved Community,

Every morning I begin my day by walking and feeding our dog, Ginger. She wakes up ready to go and can barely contain her excitement over a new day with her morning routine of breakfast followed by a short walk. Her tail slaps the wall and rungs of the handrail on her way to the staircase as I fumble toward the hook where her collar and leash hang. We ascend the stepping-stones in our backyard, duck under a growing sycamore, and emerge onto the paved path. We walk; she often tugs, tail still wagging, or slows down to see what she can smell. I walk silently, still groggy without my morning cup of coffee. Sometimes we behold the pink streaks of sunrise still melting in the air, other times we brave the rain. In the summer, the heavy, humid air greets us just outside the door; in the winter, I bundle up in darkness to meet a chilly wind or snow. This time of year, we meet the delightful cool of a season leaning into autumn. Intricate spiderwebs gleam with morning dew, and the leaves catch the fire of red, orange and gold. Without Ginger, I would rise later and savor my coffee before getting outside. I am grateful she makes walking my first movement of the day, that she insists we go outside in every kind of weather. We are good walking companions.

This month, a new worship theme "Journey with Me," will begin on September 12, the Sunday we often call Homecoming Sunday. This year, like last, there will be no grand Homecoming with a mass of people gathering in the sanctuary. Due to the Delta surge, we will remain in Phase 3, with open sign-ups of up to 25 people worshipping in the sanctuary each Sunday. Yet journey together we will, and I have become convinced that this is the only way we will make it through this pandemic; together. Many of us are weary, some have a renewed vision of what really matters in life, others are also walking with grief and loss. No matter your situation, I invite you: find a way to journey with us this fall.

Whether it is worshipping with us in the sanctuary, from home, or participating in the outdoor family worship led by Rev. Sam; whether it is attending the Worship Commission's planning session for Advent and Christmas or the Director of Music Search Committee's nurture on the meaning music makes in our lives; whether it is welcoming our new Administrative Assistant, Maria, or serving in the Drop-In Center on Tuesday nights; whether you attend Breakaway Meditation on Wednesdays at 12:15 or plan to join us for a Zoom gathering of remembrance to honor the life of Joan King, please find a way to journey with us this month. We simply cannot go it alone in these times. Sign up to serve as an usher, a reader, a liturgist. Help us figure out how we will support Afghan families settling in our region. Journey with us.

With the Delta surge impacting our lives, it feels like we turned the corner in what has been a marathon, expecting to see the finish line, only to realize we have many more miles to go. I am reminded that our God is one found on the road; that faith is not a destination but a companionship, a walking together in every season. Let us make our home on the road once more. When we are weary, may another take us by the hand; when we are lonely, may a song

rise from the throat of the person next to us; when we are discouraged, may the great God of the road go before us and behind us, surrounding us in grace.

In Peace,
Rev. Amanda



Zoom Gathering of Remembrance Honoring Joan King: Sept 12 at 3:00 PM

[Click here](#) to join us on Sunday, September 12 at 3:00 PM by Zoom for a Gathering of Remembrance to honor the life and mourn the loss of Joan King. This will be a virtual-only gathering including Joan's family from across the country. We will gather to hear stories of how Joan impacted our lives, light candles to represent her light in the world, hear her favorite hymn, view a slideshow, and pray together. Please plan to join us for this deeply felt gathering to remember our beloved Joan. Her family also invites you to share memories and photographs of Joan at <https://www.forevermissed.com/joan-m-king/about>. Or, if you prefer, you can send photos, stories, or memories to JoanLifeandMemories@gmail.com and her daughter Jennifer will add them to the website on your behalf. Let us continue to hold Joan's family in our prayers, that the God of all comfort will be with them and with all of us as we remember Joan.

Sign Up for In-person Worship

- "I was surprised how meaningful it felt to be in person."
- "I got chills hearing Amanda speak in person. Incredible!"
- "Loved being in the space and hearing the music live."
- "Seeing people was so meaningful."

These are just a few of the comments we've collected from folks who have joined us for worship in the sanctuary. We hope that all who feel comfortable would find an opportunity to sign up and see how the experience works for them.

As we transition from summer to fall, we are also transitioning from inviting people to attend worship in person to open sign ups. In-person worship will still be limited to 25 people per Sunday given our area's current case rates, and we continue to require masking and physical distancing.

[Click here](#) to sign up to worship in-person in the sanctuary any of the next four Sundays. This link will always take you to the sign-up sheet and will always contain the next four Sundays. If you have trouble signing up with this link, please contact Kim Darling directly kdarling@gmail.com



Welcome Maria Thompson, New Administrative Assistant

It is with immense gratitude to Cindy Dobbs, who has kept our congregation functioning through many seasons, including a global pandemic, and also with great joy that we welcome our new Administrative Assistant, Maria Thompson. Maria will begin working in the office on Tuesday so she can overlap with Cindy's last week and receive hands-on training. Please take the time to read Maria's bio below, and to welcome her to First Church. We ask

for your patience as Maria begins to learn the job. A tremendous thanks to our Administrative Assistant Search Committee, chaired by Lucille Dickinson, staffed by Rev. Amanda, and including Alyx Cheng, Peter Tracey, and Allison Truhlar for bringing such a strong candidate to Council, and thank you to Council for their approval of this hire.

Maria, originally from New York City, grew up in Spanish Harlem, where her parents migrated from Puerto Rico. She is the youngest of five sisters and likes to say she "...was made in Puerto Rico but born in NYC!" She moved to Atlanta GA in 1994 with her then ten-year-old daughter, Gabrielle. She accepted an 'experimental' position at the Archdiocese of Atlanta as assistant to both the Director of Development and Chancellor for Operations and Administration, then advanced to positions including special aide to the Vicar General; Spanish language interpreter [she is bi-lingual, Spanish being her first language]; archdiocesan liaison to the 1996 International Olympic Committee; event planner for the archbishop's residence when they embarked in a \$50MM campaign that resulted in three times the goal! This was her introduction to the world of hospitality.

Maria moved on to Callanwolde Fine Arts Center as the Rental and Events Director for four years before joining the Capital City Club at Brookhaven where she held the position of Catering Director. In 2003, Maria was recruited by the owner of a not-yet-built five-star resort, to be a member of the Founding Executive Team in the capacities of director of both human resources and catering of what is now The Old Edwards Inn & Spa in Highlands NC.

With her daughter Gabrielle in college at Duke University, she decided to move back to NYC where she accepted the position of assistant to the rabbinical placement director of the Reform Movement. After five years in NYC and "because the South had made me soft," she relocated to DC in 2011 to serve as executive assistant to the executive director of a large DC synagogue until June 2020, when the pandemic impacted organizational finances resulting in staff cuts.

Maria enjoys her life here with all DMV has to offer in the way of the fine arts, lectures, culinary delights, music, and all things cultural! Maria is an avid reader of both fiction and non-fiction - especially psychological thrillers – both written and in film. She misses her daughter Gabrielle, son-in-law Peter and her two grandchildren, Liliana Aubrey (5) and Noah Peter (3) in NYC. She is on an ongoing 'gentle' campaign to get them to look at the DMV as their next destination.

Worship Commission

Sign Up to Serve as Liturgist or Reader this Fall

As we move into autumn, we welcome fresh faces and voices in worship to serve as liturgists or scripture readers. [Click here](#) to sign up to serve. Liturgists provide either a Call to Worship or lead the Prayer of Confession and Words of Assurance. Both liturgists and scripture readers can lead from the sanctuary or from home by Zoom; please specify when you sign up. Our worship theme will be "Journey with Us." Questions? Contact Rev. Amanda.

All are Welcome for Advent and Christmas Worship Planning September 14 at 6:00pm

The Worship Commission invites members and friends of the congregation to join a zoom meeting on Tuesday, September 14 at 6:00-7:00pm to plan for Advent and Christmas. Please come and tell us what is most important to you about the Advent season this year. Are there themes or concerns you would like addressed? Do you have some ideas or hopes for the season? If you are interested in joining, please email Worship Chair Laura Johnson at Johnson.Laurad@gmail.com, so we can send out the zoom link prior. Please also email Laura if you cannot participate but would like to express your ideas. All are welcome and encouraged to join!

Update on Music Director Search Committee

Curious about what First Church's most newly minted committee, the Music Director search committee, has been up to in the (virtual) dog days of DC summer 2021? Since mid-July, we have diligently signed on to post-worship Zoom calls every Sunday to undertake the important task of hiring our next Music Director/Director of Music/Music Minister/Minister of Music Direction/Directional Music Minister....we're still working on the title.

To frame our search process, we delved into unconscious bias in a two-week training session led by the Rev. Dr. Ron Hopson. He encouraged us to set intentions for the search, including embracing discomfort as an indication of investment in the process, and detaching ourselves from a certain vision of the outcome, which we have found very liberating and helpful. We have also met with the Worship Commission to learn about the preliminary findings of the Racial Justice Audit Survey related to music at First Church. Both these conversations are informing our ongoing work updating the job description to reflect the hopes and expectations for First Church's music program. Looking forward, we are planning a congregation-wide "Nurture on the Music that Moves Us" on Sunday, September 5. We want this to be an opportunity to share memories of our favorite church music - soundtrack included!

If you would like to learn more about the committees' work exploring unconscious bias, please reach out to Rev. Amanda or Rev. Hopson for recommended resources. For any other questions related to the search process, please contact the search committee chair, Marian Drake, who isn't Zoomed-out yet.

September 5 Nurture on Music in Worship

Please join the Music Director Search Committee on Sunday, September 5 from 11:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m. for a nurture focused on music in worship. We will hear from you about how you view the purpose of music in our worship services. *Is it your channel to praising God, your opportunity for personal reflection, your time and place to develop community, etc.?* During the nurture, we will be **inviting everyone** to share reflections on songs that are particularly meaningful to you. For those of you who can't join, we'd love for you to participate by responding via email—a quick email to kristy.a.goodfellow@gmail.com with a song title and a short explanation will do! The Music Director Search Committee will compile the music and share with the congregation as part of this journey of understanding and appreciating our dynamic perspectives on music in worship.

Christian Education Commission

FALL FAITH FORMATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Outdoor Family Worship



September 19 at Fort Reno Park (by stage)

-4000 Chesapeake St NW

Theme – Journey with Me

Donations – Bring School Supplies for Jubilee Housing

October 17 at Anacostia Park (by pavilion)

1500 Anacostia Dr, Washington, DC.

Theme – What Does God Require of Me

Donations – Non-perishable food for Martha's Table

November 21 at A Wider Circle (at neighbor school)

9159 Brookville Rd # C, Silver Spring, MD.

Theme – Learning from our mistakes

Donations – Toys that we no longer need

(We are welcome to volunteer at AWC after the service)

Once a month, we plan to meet up at a local park to have a small service, followed by playful fun and service. This activity is to meet the spiritual and community needs of our youngest members, who are not yet able to be vaccinated. The services will begin at 10, while people will be asked to gather by 9:45.

Each service will include a Gathering, Dramatic Reading of the Story, Sharing the Message, Offering, Prayers, and Sending. We are hoping that we can have 2 or 3 children volunteer each Sunday both to tell the story and to help share the message. Rev. Sam will work with them previously to make sure they succeed and have fun!

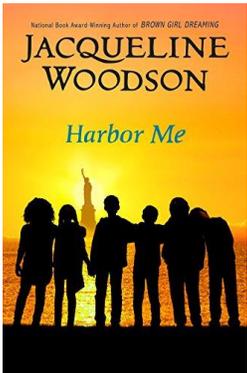
There will be no chairs, so we will either be standing or sitting on the ground. We have identified locations that are geographically varied and have a natural place to lead worship

from. Please reach out to Rev. Sam if your children or family would like to help lead service at mcferran.sam@gmail.com or 202-294-5437.

Sunday School – Follow Me in the Learning and Living of Spiritual Practices

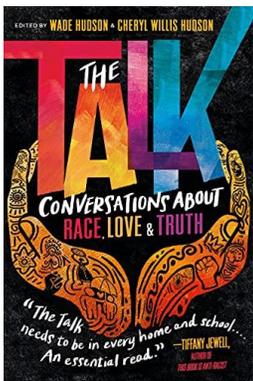
This Fall, the Pre-K to 4 Sunday School will begin with a new curriculum, **Follow Me**. Follow Me teaches spiritual practices that help us lead our lives today. We will be exploring the practices of “Welcome,” “Confess,” and “Hope.” We will learn where these practices can be found in the Bible, where we have seen them in the world, and how God wants us to practice them. We will also incorporate teachings about racial justice and helping us become anti-racist. Sunday School will be at 9:30 via Zoom or as a part of the outdoor worship services.

Middle School – “What does it mean to be a harbor for one another?”



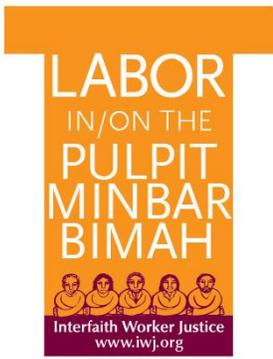
For our Middle Schoolers (grades 5-8), we plan to read Harbor Me by Jacqueline Woodson, where we will explore what it means to truly “love thy neighbor.” What is required of us to best understand the challenges facing our friends and neighbors? How do we create safe spaces where we can speak our truths? Each youth will be provided with a copy of this book. A link and review to the book can be found [here](#). The class will meet periodically on Sunday evenings in September, October, and November. In November, the youth will share what they learned in a Sunday Service and go on a two-night trip with the High School Youth to learn about racial justice in Richmond, VA (if safety permits).

High School – “Speaking our Truths”



Our High School Youth will work on identifying what truths they need to know and speak in order to navigate their lives. With The Talk: Conversations About Race, Love and Truth by Wade and Cheryl Willis Hudson as their guides, they will learn about ‘realities’ facing our neighbors, as well what truths they need to claim as high school youth in 2021. A link and review of the book can be found [here](#). The class will meet periodically on Sunday evenings in November, December, and January. They will share their truths in a service in January. Along with the Middle School youth, they will go to Richmond, VA (safety permitting) for a service trip to learn more about social justice and community building.

**Faith and Justice:
Labor in the Pulpit
September 5th, 2021**



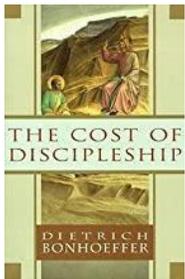
For our sixth year, First Church will be honoring Labor Day by focusing on worker justice. The pandemic has shown us just how vulnerable millions of American workers and their families are because of a lack of a living wage, health benefits, and a safety net to support them in their retirement. The faith community has an important role to both be a prophetic voice for economic and social justice, but to be in solidarity with these workers and their families during these difficult times.



This year, we are so excited and honored to welcome Rev West McNeil (they/them) of the Labor-Religion Coalition of New York State and tri-chair of the New York State Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral revival. For the past decade they have organized with faith communities, labor unions and grassroots community groups around economic justice and human rights. West is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ and holds an M.Div. from Union Theological Seminary in New York City, where they were a Fellow with the Kairos Center. Prior to joining Labor-Religion Coalition in 2014, West was a parish minister in Tacoma, WA. They have a B.A. in journalism from Ithaca College.

We look forward to welcoming West via Zoom, and we hope you can join us!

Please email Rev. Sam McFerran for any questions at mcferran.sam@gmail.com.



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/9364327834>. All are welcome.

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 sign up using this link:
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0A4FAAA72AA1FF2-first1>

Thanks so much,
Outreach and Membership Commission

Social Action & Awareness

September Second Sunday Offering: UCC Haiti Appeal and Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Region

Earthquake in Haiti

The September Second Sunday Offering is addressing two international humanitarian crises and we are asking you to give generously. We will be supporting the UCC's relief efforts in Haiti and Lutheran Social Services' efforts to help Afghani refugees being resettled locally.

A UCC Haiti Appeal seeks to raise \$100,000 for immediate relief and longer-term recovery for the thousands of people in Haiti who are reeling from sequential disasters. These include the deadly, destructive 7.2 earthquake on August 14 in western Haiti, and Tropical Depression Grace, expected to make landfall in the same region August 16-17. The resulting flooding and mudslides are likely to add misery to the earthquake zone and to hinder the search and rescue of survivors.

Hundreds (nearly 1,400 as of August 16) are confirmed dead and additional thousands injured due to the earthquake. The UCC is working with Global Ministries, Church World Service and the ACT Alliance among other partners, all of which are currently assessing the situation for damages and needs.

UCC Global H.O.P.E. team leader Joshua Baird was in touch with the partner networks on August 16 and said that the ACT Alliance reports that more than 60 percent of the people of Haiti have been impacted by the disaster. Both the ACT Alliance and Church World Service have spoken about "significant infrastructure challenges," with road closures due to civil unrest compounded by earthquake damage.

Immediate needs include water, due to the corruption of water tanks, and first aid. They note that there are not enough hospital beds in existing, structurally safe facilities. "People are being treated in hospital yards – or dying there," according to Global Ministries' bilateral partners CONASPEH (The National Spiritual Council of Haitian Churches) and House of Hope, Baird said.

Other challenges facing Haitians include COVID-19. Vaccination of health care workers and people over 65 only got started in early August. There's also the political and social disruption following the assassination of the country's president in July. For more information go to www.ucc.org/ucc-haiti-appeal.

Influx of Afghan Allies

Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area (LSSNCA) welcomes an influx of Afghan Allies as a result of the Biden Administration's evacuation of 2,500 individuals by September 11. Afghan allies and their families began arriving at Fort Lee, located outside of Richmond, VA, on July 30.

"LSSNCA, with our national partner Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS), has been advocating for the immediate evacuation of Afghan allies and their families," said Kristyn Peck, CEO of LSSNCA. "For many, evacuation is a matter of life and death, and we are thrilled to witness the arrival of these heroic individuals and welcome them to our community."

Since 2002, the United States has employed Afghan allies to serve alongside its troops, diplomats, and other government employees to advance the country's military and diplomatic goals. As a result of their affiliation, these individuals and their families suffer direct threats to their safety as they have become the targets of anti-American violence. The Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program provides them with a legal path to safety.

The 2,500 evacuees will be paroled into the U.S. and their status adjusted to SIV once they complete all screenings and medical evaluations. During that time, they will be housed at Fort Lee before being transported to their final destinations. It is expected that the majority will be resettled in the D.C. Metro Area where they have connections and will be served by the local network of resettlement agencies including LSSNCA.

"Now is one of those times that we are being called to put our mission into action," said Peck. "We will look back on this time in history and remember our role in welcoming those who supported U.S. missions during the 20-year war in Afghanistan. It takes all of us to do what we can to create welcoming communities for our new neighbors who have served beside us for so long,"

Within the past week, LSSNCA has already welcomed several of these families. As processing at Fort Lee only takes a matter of days, dozens of additional families are expected to be referred to the LSSNCA resettlement program every week. LSSNCA has set up an Operation Welcome Afghan Allies web page to respond to those interested in providing temporary housing, transportation, in-kind donations, storage space, and financial contributions. For more information go to www.lssnca.org

Your timely and generous donation will be split equally between these two organizations who are doing such important work.

September Calendar

Wednesday, September 1

12:15 pm Break Away Meditation

Friday, September 3

Staff Holiday (Labor Day observed)

Sunday, September 5

10:30 am Worship

11:40 am Adult Nurture

Monday, September 6

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

Tuesday, September 7

6:30 pm Church Council

Wednesday, September 8

12:15 pm Break Away Meditation

7:00 pm Wednesday Monthly Small Group

Sunday, September 12

10:30 am Worship

11:40 am Coffee Hour

3:00 pm Joan King Memorial Service

Monday, September 13

8:00 pm Young Adult Group

Tuesday, September 14

6:00 pm Worship Commission

Wednesday, September 15

12:15 pm Break Away Meditation

7:30 pm Social Action Commission

Sunday, September 19

10:30 am Worship

11:40 am Coffee Hour

Monday, September 20

8:00 pm Young Adult Group

Tuesday, September 21

7:00 pm Outreach & Membership

7:30 pm Facilities Commission

Wednesday, September 22

12:15 pm Break Away Meditation

Friday, September 24

Gabriel's Horn Deadline

Sunday, September 26

10:30 am Worship

11:40 am Coffee Hour

Monday, September 27

6:00 pm Monthly Small Group

8:00 pm Young Adult Group

Wednesday, September 29

12:15 pm Break Away Meditation



**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. Maria Thompson

Sexton – Ms. Ines Marquez

Members in Members in Discernment –Lynaya
Morris, LaTayna Purnell

945 G Street NW, Washington DC 20001
Phone: 202.628.4317 • Fax: 202.347.4911
www.firstuccdc.org