

GABRIEL'S HORN

First Congregational United Church of Christ

May 2022



Beloved Community,

At five years old, my mom enrolled me in dance lessons. First it was tap (*"it's up to you, New York, New York!"*), then jazz, ballet, and lyrical. I learned to leap, pirouette without losing balance, jump into lifts, and dance on the tops of my toes. Two essentials carried me—relying on a fixed focal point (when spinning) and cellular memory. A fixed focal point keeps one steady even as the body whirls and turns. "Spotting" a focal point tells the body where it is even when eyesight blurs in motion. Cellular memory refers to the body's ability to store memory. When the music plays, the body knows what to do instinctually. When a routine is learned at the cellular level, the memory of each move is so engrained that the focus can shift to the performance aspects, such as poise, feeling, and amplification of each movement. If you know something at a cellular level, even anxiety cannot make you forget.

As the season of Eastertide gets underway and we hear stories of "incarnational encounters," as Rev. Diana noted in Sunday's sermon, our theme for this season is **Embodied Faith**. I wonder—what is the focal point of our faith such that no matter what is happening in the body or the spinning world, we can stay balanced? Or, what faith practices do we integrate at the cellular level such that anxiety cannot have its way? We might consider such questions at an individual level, then recall the good news that we are, collectively, the Body of Christ. What is our shared focal point? Our collective cellular memory? How do we re-member the body of Christ each time we come together and simultaneously do this for or with those who cannot re-member? In these times, when so many attacks are made upon the body—the Black body, the transgender body, the immigrant body, the sick body, the mentally ill body, the addicted body, the imprisoned body—our faith must be enfleshed. It must become an incarnational faith. I hope you will invite your mind to limber up and your heart to dance as we explore how worship lands in the body and how our justice-seeking is lived out in our feet, hands, and mouths.

This month offers many gifts of beauty and newness in our life together. On Saturday, April 30th you are invited to join us for my installation as your Senior Minister, with a rooftop reception to follow. On May 8th we will offer our annual Mother's Day blessing, and we prayerfully anticipate it will be our first Sunday with our new Director of Music Ministry, Leela Koilpillai. On May 22nd, we will gather as a body for our spring annual meeting.

There are also opportunities to embody faith this month. Hop on the meal train to help nourish the growing Truhlar-Laing family. Sign up to help with the Poor Peoples Campaign by registering to march with us or hosting our pre-march launch from the church. Sign up to serve as a scripture reader, liturgist, or usher. Serve at the Drop-In Center for young adults. In this way, we live out our faith together as one body.

As this month carries the joy of the resurrection season, I pray that it will also mark a return to the body for you. A return to your physical body as you awaken to an embodied

faith. A return to the Body of Christ as we re-member what it means to live out our faith together. With our vision fixed on the God who loves justice, may our faith live at the cellular level, fully integrated into the people God has called us to be. In all our particularities, may we give thanks for this one, beautiful life which we share in covenant with God and with one another.

In Gratitude,
Amanda



Welcome our New Director of Music Ministry: Leela Koilpillai

Leela Koilpillai came to the United States at the age of six, eventually returning to study medicine in Pune, India. While in college she was offered an opportunity to lead a girls' choir and loved it so much it switched to a music major. She holds degrees in piano and vocal performance and has studied choral conducting under Robert Shaw, Helmut Rilling and Don Neuen. She has sung with the Washington Opera, and performed extensively in the Washington, D.C. area. Her soprano voice was favorably reviewed by the Washington Post as "... beautifully

crystalline."

Leela has taught and conducted every age group and level of experience, from Kindergarten to Elderhostel. Her high school choirs (Fairfax County, VA) have sung at the White House, Kennedy Center and St. Patrick's Cathedral in NYC. She is skillful as at developing, motivating, and inspiring musical groups. She formed and directed a chamber vocal ensemble in Portland, Maine, "Northern Lights," which focused on contemporary choral repertoire with an emphasis on Scandinavian and Russian music.

Leela's organ teachers include Ray Cornils and David Maxwell. In the summer of 2016 she had the honor to be one of the organists in the Kotschmar (which boasts 102 ranks, 6,862 pipes in eight divisions) Organ Day festival. She has taken organ coaching with Ray Cornils and David Maxwell (State Street Church, Portland, ME).

In Maine, Leela taught at Waynflete School, coached musicals at Greeley HS, in Cumberland, led the "Rocka' My Soul" gospel ensemble in S. Berwick while maintaining a private piano and vocal studio. She has led tours in the Eastern U.S and Europe. She loves to cook, draw, paint and write in her spare time.

Council Capsule

COUNCIL CAPSULE: APRIL 12, 2022

Rev. Amanda invited discussion on making our Zoom hybrid worship sustainable. Various options are being brainstormed by Amanda with our current volunteer Zoom Moderators: Alyx, Allison, Abigail and Barry. There are some scheduling holes. Council discussed possibilities including: once a month live streaming to YouTube, hiring a paid Zoom Moderator, or recruiting volunteers to just watch over our Zoom without dropping in files or coordinating remote worship leadership. Council affirmed our commitment to hybrid worship.

Putting together the Directory has been challenging. ServantKeeper does not include all the categories we have had in the directory. Apparently, Cindy used to manually put the directory together in Word. The printed directory is delayed, but Trista and Amanda continue working on it. More than likely next year Amanda will request an easier platform for our digital and print membership directory.

Rev. Amanda announced she and Rev. Jason put together a panel for a press conference for April 13, at 2:00 pm in the sanctuary to be zoomed from First Church to discuss hateful attacks against a predominantly white UCC church in the Chicago area that decided to “fast from whiteness” for Lent. The church is led by Rev. John Edgerton, a friend of Amanda's. They had decided to center their worship music around songs of African Americans and people of color. Jason has lined up Jacqui Lewis from New York, perhaps Traci Blackmon, Vertie Powers, and others. Amanda will pray people in and Jason will close it out. Amanda had also contacted Rev. Freeman Palmer. There were comments and questions from Council.

Rev. Sam was full of good news: the youth participated in evening vespers, engaging with scripture, poetry, writings by Howard Thurman, and were able to hear from various mentors about putting faith in action; Sunday school is back in swing with excellent CE teachers; we will continue outdoor worship with Peoples monthly; there will be volunteer service experiences at places like Christ House and Chairos Medical Center for Homeless Men; and July 31 is the day set for First Church to go cheer on the Nats.

Lucille explained the operating budget reports. We are on track with some savings, but still show a deficit. We have a lot to learn this year about where we are headed with Amanda fully on board. The Finance Committee sent a memo that it will wait to address some of the budget structural issues that may affect sustainability, but rather focus on growth and the excess endowment earnings. Commissions, however, are encouraged to look at their budgets and see where they might have savings. Also, Finance will look at the Lincoln Property Management contract to see if anything else can be brought in house. The sense of the Council was unanimous in support of the Finance Committee's suggestions.

Facilities approved Amanda's request for a one time overnight use by a church group participating in the Poor People's Campaign. Sandy Sorensen emailed Amanda it would be wonderful if First Church could serve as a launch space and hospitality center (masked indoors) with coffee, pre-packaged breakfast snacks for the Poor People's Campaign participants on June 18. SAAC will make arrangements with facilities. A pre-march gathering

will take place at Peoples on May 21 from 10-1. They are hoping to have a morning worship service live streamed with the Campaign's co-chair Rev. Liz Theoharis to preach. The service will be followed by an hour long training live streamed about what to know about voting rights for 2022 elections. This event is not yet confirmed.

All are invited to Rev. Amanda's installation on April 30 at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Aubra Love, Dr. Rene Harrison, and Rev. Wilcox will be celebrating Amanda; our choir will sing "The Storm is Passing Over;" and the building gave permission to use the roof top for the reception, weather permitting. Worship Commission will need a new chair since Lynaya Morris is relocating to Canada with her husband. All are sad to see them go and wish them well. She is still a member in discernment. Masked Congregational singing is allowed by our Regathering Task Force. COP will provide the Easter coffee hour. Next month Council will continue work on its part of the Racial Justice Audit.

Diane Brenneman



Spring Congregational Meeting May 22, 2022

Council warmly invites you all to attend our Spring Meeting which will be held after our Sunday Morning service on May 22nd. Like our services, this will be a hybrid meeting with both Sanctuary and Zoom attendees. An agenda will be available by May 15th. One item will be our initial steps into living the findings of our Racial Justice Audit. Your attendance and input at our three yearly Congregational Meetings allows us to

determine how we live our faith and enact the policies to make this happen. We value the presence of each and every one of you on the 22nd.

In Peace,
Susan Anderson, Moderator
Andrew Hamilton, Asst. Moderator

Care of Parish



Hop on the Meal Train for the Truhlar-Laing Family

[Click here](#) to hop on the Meal Train for Emily and Allison as Emily recovers from birth and they enjoy time with their newborn baby, Robin Skye. Please note this is a "quiet drop-off" given the newborn baby, simply place the food in the outdoor cooler on the day you have signed up between 4:00 - 7:00 PM. Note they are vegetarian (YES to eggs/dairy, NO to seafood/meat). They love Mediterranean food, fresh vegetables and fruit salads. Learn more by reading the "special instructions" section of the Meal Train. GrubHub gift cards are also welcome. Thank you for supporting this growing family as they lean into the love of our church family. We thank God for the joy they are bringing to us! Questions?

Contact Lindsay Swisher, coordinator of this Meal Train and member of Care of Parish, at lindsay.swisher@gmail.com.

Social Action & Awareness



Second Sunday Special Offering: Poor People's Campaign March on Washington

This month's second Sunday special offering, received on May 8, will support the Poor People's Campaign March on Washington, scheduled for June 18. As people from all over the nation prepare to descend on Washington, DC for a generationally transformative and disruptive gathering of poor and low-wealth people, faith communities, state leaders, moral allies, and unions, your support will help the PPC assist with the costs of transportation, lodging, and food. This mass march aims to shift the moral narrative, build power, and make real policies that fully address poverty. On Friday, June 17th, the PPC will host a community dinner for 1,000 poor and low-wealth people in Freedom Plaza from 5:00 - 7:00 PM, followed by a 7:30 PM memorial service at the reflection pool near the Lincoln Memorial to remember all who died due to COVID-19. Rev. Amanda is serving on the Host Committee for these events, and First Church will serve as a place of hospitality and launching space for UCC leaders and members prior to the march on June 18. [Click here](#) to register to march with us on June 18. Wish to give of your time and talents? Stay tuned for opportunities to greet marchers, provide hospitality, serve at the community dinner in Freedom Plaza, and more.

Christian Education



Adult Nurture on Book Circles: May 1

Over the six weeks of Lent nearly 40 members and friends committed themselves to the spiritual practice of learning in community by taking part in our Lenten Book Circles discussing racial justice. Each circle explored one of these five books: My Monticello (novel); Black Hands, White House: Enslaved Labor and the Making of America (history); My Grandmother's Hands (somatic/experiential); In My Grandmother's House (memoir); or Raising White Kids in a Racially Unjust America (parenting). On May 1, participants will have an opportunity to share insights from their book and the experience of collective learning as we deepen our spiritual commitment to dismantling racism within ourselves and in community with one another and God. All are welcome to take part in the conversation that will follow

participants sharing. Rev. Amanda will facilitate this hybrid nurture, which will take place both in the chapel (in-person) and on Zoom.

Seabury Celebration of Service
Washington Cathedral
May 4th at 10 AM



Lucille Dickinson

We are excited to participate in the annual Seabury Celebration of Service where we honor older adults from Episcopal and UCC Congregations who have served their churches as well as their communities. This year's preacher is Rev. Freeman Palmer, the Central Atlantic Conference Minister. First Church is honored to celebrate Lucille Dickinson.

If you are interested in attending, please let Rev. Sam McFerran know at mcferran.sam@gmail.com as there is very limited space per church. Masks are required.

Lucille is a true servant leader, committed to help the Church best serve the world. For 40 years, she has done so everything for the church - served as moderator, been our long term treasurer and financial wizard, and chaired multiple commissions and search committees. However, her most meaningful work is to help lead the church to become a more anti-racist and inclusive church. She reminds us that this hard and holy work is grounded in acknowledging the sins and hurts of the past. We must examine the ways that structural racism still pervades in our society, and has shaped our own lives. Only through this difficult interior work can we truly commit ourselves to create a Beloved Community, where all are valued and heard, and where socioeconomic forces no longer preserve an unjust status quo, steeped in white supremacy. Her steadfast belief in personal and collective change inspires us all! It reminds us that through our heartfelt faithfulness and good work, the arc of history does indeed bend toward justice, Thank you, Lucille! We love you! From your family at First Church!

Worship Commission



Installation of Rev. Amanda Hendler-Voss: Saturday, April 30

[Click here](#) to join us by Zoom or [click here](#) to sign-up to join us in the sanctuary for the installation of Rev. Amanda Hendler-Voss as Senior Minister of First Congregational United Church of Christ on Saturday, April 30 at 3:00 PM. Please join the Potomac Association of the Central Atlantic Conference of the United Church of Christ, delegates of local churches, and authorized ministers as we

prayerfully install Rev. Amanda in this service of worship. The service will include a procession of local clergy, a candle-lighting liturgy led by commissions, choral music, a sermon from the Rev. Aubra Love, and a charge to our congregation by Dr. Renee Harrison. Please note this service will be recorded for later viewing and made available on our YouTube channel. The service will be followed by a reception organized by Care of Parish. Please support Rev. Amanda with your presence and participation.



Seasonal Worship theme: Embodied Faith

Our after Easter theme this year is Embodied Faith. We just finished our Lenten/Easter Theme "Breath of Life." It is the breath of life from our creator that brings us into embodiment. It is through Jesus that our faith is physically embodied as an individual and in the community. What does it mean to have an embodied faith? What does it mean to be the body of Christ? How do we embody our faith in confusing, painful, and unjust experiences? Join us over the next six weeks as we

reflect on these questions. Learn how to be more centered in our bodies and more connected to our faith community.



Nurture on Worship-June 5 12pm

Why do we worship? Why do we sing, pray, offer announcements, etc.? Have you ever stopped to ask these questions? If you are curious and want to understand what worship means to and for our First Church community please join the Worship Commission for this Nurture on June 5, 2022, 12pm.



Seeking Scripture Readers and Liturgists

We are in need of a scripture reader this Sunday as well as scripture readers and liturgists for the Sundays between now and Pentecost on June 5. [Click here](#) to sign up; you can lead by Zoom or in person. Or, if you have trouble using Google docs, just email me back with a date that works for you and I will get you signed up quickly. Your voice and participation enrich our worship experience as a community! Thank you for your consideration.

worship
with us



Hybrid Worship Update: Seeking Volunteers

Following thoughtful conversation with our Zoom Moderator team, Council, and Worship Commission, beginning in June we will move pre-recorded content and remote worship leadership (such as scripture readers or liturgists) to the first two Sundays of the month. For the remaining 2-3 Sundays, our service will still be accessible by Zoom, and we are seeking Zoom Coordinators to open the Zoom meeting and monitor it. Please note that most people who use Zoom fluently can serve in this capacity, and our Zoom Coordinator can volunteer either from the sound booth (in the sanctuary) or from the comfort of their home. This allows our Zoom

Moderators (who are responsible for sound checks, pre-recorded content, and spotlighting Zoom worship leaders) can volunteer at a more sustainable pace while still maintaining our commitment to hybrid worship and the Zoom platform. If you would like to volunteer to serve as a Zoom Coordinator, please email Rev. Amanda who will share the schedule for sign-ups and connect you to a basic how-to.

Outreach and Membership



BE PART OF OUR EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME – SIGN UP TO BE AN USHER

Whether it's welcoming members back to in-person worship or greeting strangers when they wander in wondering just what goes on in here at 10th and G, you can be on the front lines on Sunday mornings. You don't have to have any experience: Veterans or new recruits: It doesn't matter. We need two to three

usher/greeters each Sunday. If interested, please sign up using this link:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0A4FAAA72AA1FF2-first1>

Finance

Treasurer's Report

Lucille Dickinson

In March I started reporting on financial aspects of the church, so that you feel informed about how things operate and how the church is doing financially. This month I want to highlight the endowment fund and how it supports the operating budget.

To recap the big picture of the church's 2022 budget, the total budget approved by the congregation is \$787,000.

- On the income side, offerings (pledged, unpledged, Second Sunday) support 42%, building use income supports 26%, and **transfers from the endowment fund support 22%**. The budget approved in January projects that 10% will be covered by bequests received since late 2019 which were not placed in the endowment fund and, therefore, have very fortunately been available to support the church during the pandemic and its effects on income.
- On the expenditure side, \$403,400 is budgeted for staff, \$82,500 for major repairs and replacements, and \$179,200 for facilities (but note that building income of \$205,800 offsets much of the major repairs and facilities spending). The remaining \$122,600 is allocated to benevolences, mission, and parish programs.

Most of the church's endowment fund comes from the proceeds the church realized from site development in 2007-2011. In 2007 the church sold the air rights above the church to a private developer. The proceeds both financed the entire cost of the new church building and enlarged the endowment fund. Before site development the endowment fund was roughly \$500,000. After the church was built and the net site development proceeds (\$3,400,000) were received (in 2011-2013), and with earnings on a much larger endowment, the endowment was \$4,152,700 by December 2013. This became the Investment Commission's baseline for setting the fund's growth targets considering inflation.

Each year 3% of the rolling average of the endowment fund (based on eight quarters) is transferred to the operating budget. In addition, per the wishes (a preference, not a direction) of Jim and Miriam Ross accompanying their \$141,742 bequest in 2007, half the interest is budgeted for mission. So in a year following a year with a positive rate of return, just over 3% is transferred from the endowment fund to the operating budget. **In 2022 that amounts to \$172,600, or 22% of the total planned spending.**

In May 2012 the church approved an investment policy to guide the Investment Commission. Here are some excerpts from that policy:

Objectives: The primary goals of the FCUCC Investment Commission will be 1) to preserve the capital of the Endowment Fund, 2) to provide a significant income

contribution to each year's annual budget, 3) to protect the endowment from inflation, and 4) to grow the size of the endowment. Where consistent with the goals stated above, the Investment Commission will seek to integrate concern for the Church's mission and socially responsible investing into its management of the endowment investments.

The Investment Commission will seek to earn at least 3% net total return after subtracting inflation each calendar year based on the total value of the Endowment Fund as of December 31st of the preceding year.

Investment Guidelines: To achieve its objectives, the Investment Commission may invest the Church's endowment funds in stocks, bonds, mutual funds, CDs, Real Estate Investment Trusts, and traditional bank accounts. It will not invest the Endowment Fund directly in real estate or other real property. As a means for limiting risk, the Investment Commission will not make investments through short sales or sales on the margin. Up to 40% of the Church's endowment may be invested in foreign (non-U.S.) financial instruments.

The primary vehicle for protecting the Church's endowment will be diversification of assets. ... across asset types, ... within asset types, ... across sectors of the economy, and ... across national economies.

The Investment Commission will make its investment decisions with a moderate tolerance for risk.

To maintain the desired diversity, the portfolio is allocated as follows:

PORTFOLIO ALLOCATION	Target	Actual 12/31/2021	
Cash	5.0%	1.8%	
Bonds	35.0%	33.9%	
Stocks	55.0%	59.5%	
Total Domestic		37.0%	41.5%
Domestic, Broad		33.3%	36.7%
Domestic, Socially Responsible		3.7%	4.8%
International		18.0%	18.1%
Inflation Hedge	5.0%	4.7%	
Total	100.0%	100.0%	

The vast majority – 98% on December 31 -- of the endowment fund is invested in Vanguard funds. The administrative costs are very low and the oversight by the volunteers on the Investment Commission is relatively simple, with rebalancing by the Investment Commission as necessary. The full names and symbols of the church's Vanguard investments are below, in case you want to look them up:

Bonds. Target is 35% of portfolio:

- Vanguard Total Bond Market Index Fund Admiral Shares (VBTLX). 20% of portfolio on December 31. Broad exposure to U.S. investment-grade securities.
- Vanguard Total International Bond Index Fund Admiral Shares (VTABX). 9% of portfolio on December 31. Broad exposure to non-U.S. investment-grade securities.
- Vanguard Intermediate-Term Investment-Grade Fund Admiral Shares (VFIDX). 5% of portfolio on December 31. Diversified exposure to medium- and high-quality investment-grade bonds with 5-10 year average maturities.

Stocks

- Vanguard Total Stock Market Index Fund Admiral Shares (VTSAX). Target is 33.3% of portfolio. Provides exposure to entire U.S. equity market.
- Vanguard FTSE Social Index Fund Admiral Shares (VFTAX). Target is 3.7% of portfolio. Tracks performance of FTSE4Good US Select Index.
- Vanguard Total International Stock Index Fund Admiral Shares (VTIAX). Target is 18.0% of portfolio. Equity exposure to both developed and emerging international economies.

Inflation Hedge. Target is 5% of portfolio.

- Vanguard Short-Term Inflation Protected Securities Index Fund Admiral Shares (VTAPX). Tracks index that measures performance of inflation-protected public obligations of the U.S. Treasury.

This article is longer than usual -- and there's more that could be included -- but I hope this provides a starting point for you to understand the church's endowment fund. The Finance Commission and I seek broad involvement, transparency, and checks and balances in stewarding your money. (The 2021 annual report includes information on the performance of the endowment fund through December 31, 2021 and the full investment policy approved in May 2012.)

Let me know if you have any questions, lucilledickinson@aol.com. Other volunteers on the Investment Commission are Nan McConnell, Ann Bushmiller, Peter Tracey, and Karen Pence (advisor).

May Calendar

Sunday, May 1

9:30 am Bible Workbench
9:45 am Choir Rehearsal
10:30 am Worship
Adult Nurture on Books Circles

Tuesday, May 3

1:00 pm Staff Meeting
6:00 pm Drop- In Center

Wednesday, May 4

10:00 am Seabury Celebration for Lucille
12:15 pm Break Away Meditation

Sunday, May 8

9:30 am Bible Workbench
9:45 am Choir Rehearsal
10:30 am Worship
11:30 am Coffee Hour by Zoom

Tuesday, May 10

1:00 pm Staff Meeting
6:00 pm Drop- In Center

Wednesday, May 11

12:15 pm Break Away Meditation

Sunday, May 15

9:30 am Bible Workbench
9:45 am Choir Rehearsal
10:30 am Worship
11:30 am Coffee Hour by Zoom

Tuesday, May 17

6:00 pm Drop- In Center

Wednesday, May 18

12:15 pm Break Away Meditation

Sunday, May 22

9:30 am Bible Workbench
9:45 am Choir Rehearsal
10:30 am Worship
12:00 am Spring Congregational Meeting

Tuesday, May 24

12:00 pm NCC/NCS Jewish-Christen
1:00 pm Staff Meeting
6:00 pm Drop-In Center

Wednesday, May 25

12:00 pm NCC/NCS Jewish-Christen
12:15 pm Break Away Meditation

Friday, May 27

Memorial Day Observed

Sunday, May 29

9:30 am Bible Workbench
9:45 am Choir Rehearsal
10:30 am Worship
11:30 am Coffee Hour by Zoom

Tuesday, May 31

1:00 pm Staff Meeting
6:00 pm Drop-In Center

We are an Open & Affirming congregation, welcoming all LGBTQ+ individuals and families into the full life and leadership of our church.



**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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

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