

# GABRIEL'S HORN

First Congregational United Church of Christ

February 2023



Beloved Community,

As we enter February, may the blessings of Black History Month be yours. After walking with Howard Thurman as our Black History Month ancestor of faith in 2022, we have decided to continue the tradition. This year, we will lift up Pauli Murray's theme, "Hope is a song in a weary throat," in worship, as we walk with this activist, lawyer, priest and poet who defied the gender norms their time. A graduate of Howard Law School, Murray's senior thesis arguing that segregation violated the 13th and 14th Amendments helped the team that successfully argued *Brown v. Board of Education*. Murray maintained a thriving correspondence with Eleanor Roosevelt in which they debated the issues of the day through the lens of Murray's lived experience of discrimination on the basis of race and sex. I hope you will join us for rich worship services this month, including on February 12th when we are blessed to welcome the Rev. Thomas Bowen as our guest preacher, Director of Mayor Bowser's Office of Religious Affairs and

Office on African American Affairs.

As a new Council convenes this month under the leadership of Moderator Andrew Hamilton and Assistant Moderator Lindsay Swisher, we are also excited to unroll our plans for adult formation and education for the season ahead. On February 5th and 12th, join us following worship and a brief coffee hour for a "taste and see" event featuring our Bible Workbench class, led by Andrew Hamilton. Then on February 26th we are thrilled to host a book talk and celebration with our own Dwan Reece, Curator of Music and Performing Arts at the Smithsonian's Museum of African American History & Culture, as she releases her book, [Musical Crossroads](#).

This month also ushers us into Lent, a forty day journey to the cross as we prepare to receive the mystery of resurrection at Easter. Our journey together through the geography of the heart will begin on Ash Wednesday, with a 7:00 evening service in the sanctuary and on Zoom on February 22nd. Please join us as we take part in the ancient ritual of imposing the ashes with the words, "Beloved child of God, from dust you come and to dust you shall return." Lent is a time when we face our mortality and human frailty, turning our lives back to God as the crocuses begin to bloom to face the sun. In Lent, I invite you to take on the practice of learning in community during Lent by signing up to join a Lenten Learning Circle focused on a book, workbook, or podcast grappling with the sin of racism.

February promises to be a rich month, so root yourself here at First Church where your spirit can

grow. As seeds quicken in the belly of the earth, we feel the lingering chill of winter even as the days lengthen once more. Much is happening just below the surface, and soon we will begin to see green all around. But for now, let us root ourselves in community, worship, and God's love. The Spirit will give the growth.

In Peace,

Amanda

## Council Capsule

Council members gathered for the last meeting of their year of service. Sam led us in a prayer of gratitude for all that Council and the church have done that mattered for all the church. Amanda expressed thanks to Susan for her leadership and steady presence and guidance throughout the year.

Staff evaluations and goal setting meetings were in progress and Amanda asked the Council members to let her know if they had any feedback regarding the staff's work and performance.

The curriculum "Our Whole Lives" Faith and Sexuality will be offered for first and second graders before worship. The teaching team is Amanda, Anna Kiss, and Barbara Gerlach.

Amanda reported that the Central Atlantic Conference passed a resolution sent to General Synod about encouraging predominantly white congregations to actively confront white supremacy. She was part of a group that put together a resource for churches all along the spectrum of antiracism including churches that are just beginning to do this work. The resource is about creating institutional change. Amanda is planning to attend General Synod this summer in Indianapolis and she will likely doing some presenting as part of the Join the Movement, that's the National UCC's anti-racism program. In our congregationalist, democratic system the CAC team will have to go before a lot of different bodies and lobby, rub elbows, answer questions about the resolution. There are churches in our conference that will be testing this resource. She did not volunteer first Church because we already did the audit and we will be doing our training this spring with Rev. LaShauna Austria. The group that is shepherding this resolution through the General Synod has been meeting at First Church over the many months they have been working on this together.

Sam was very happy about the great team of teachers and students who returned to Sunday school on January 8. The next goal is to reopen the nursery.

Andrew provided an update from the nominations committee about progress on filling a slate of candidates for the various positions that need to be filled for the year ahead.

Lucille presented the final budget for 2023 and requested that the Council approve it as a motion to the Annual Congregational Meeting on January 22. The Council approved the budget motion unanimously to be presented to the Congregation for its consideration.

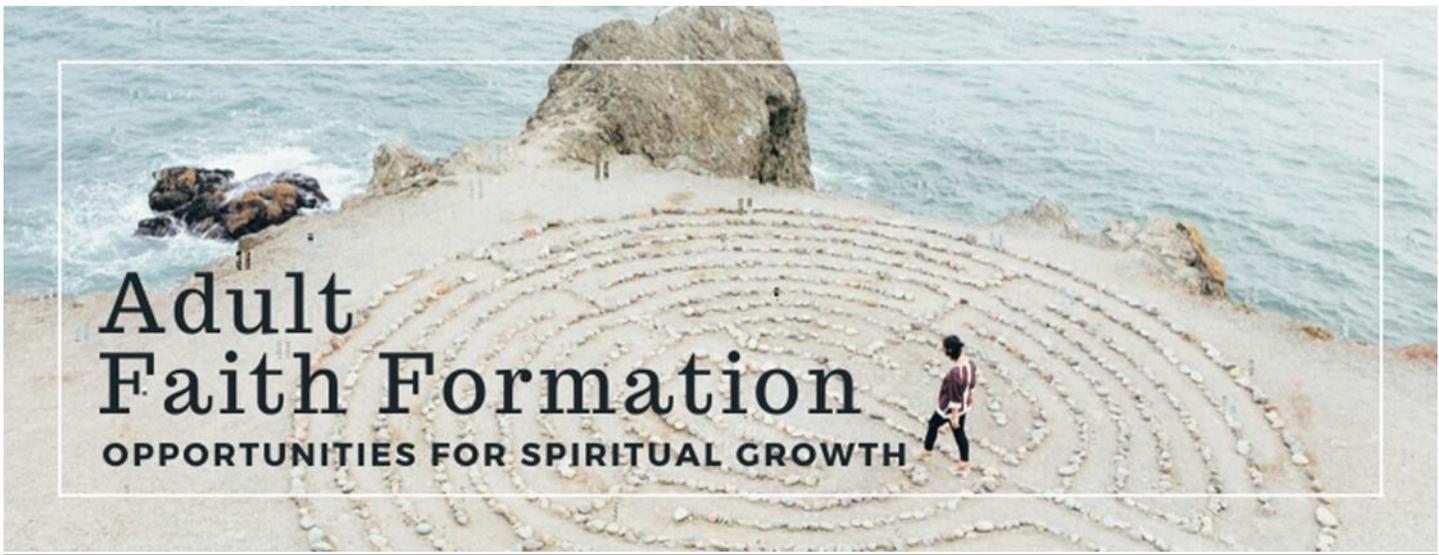
Susan opened discussion about the first completed part of the "Safe Church Policy" which had been shared with Council at the December meeting. The Council was most grateful for the amount of thoughtful work and research by Amanda and John Smeltzer in drafting this part of the policy. This first part deals primarily with physical safety issues for all the congregation with a particular emphasis on the physical safety policies affecting our children. This was given priority due to the reopening of Sunday school. The second part of the policy, covering anti-racism, micro-aggressions

and other safety and safe space issues will be developed next year. The first part was approved unanimously by Council to be presented as a motion to the Congregation for approval at the annual meeting.

## Christian Education

### Our Whole Lives Faith & Sexuality Class for 1st-2nd Graders

First Church will launch the Our Whole Lives (OWL) program for 1st–2nd graders on January 29th, a six-week class that provides accurate, age-appropriate, comprehensive sexuality education. Rev. Amanda, a trained instructor who has taught OWL in three other congregations, will lead the teaching team, which includes the Rev. Barbara Gerlach and Anna Kiss. Rev. Sam will also offer material support for this series. The OWL curriculum is a joint project of the United Church of Christ and the Unitarian Universalist Association. Through OWL, we will nurture the worth of each child, encouraging them to value themselves and act on their values throughout their lives. In 2024, we hope to offer OWL to our first 5th–6th grade cohort. Questions? [Contact Rev. Amanda.](#)



### Adult Education & Faith Formation Opportunities this Spring

#### **Bible Workbench “Taste & See” Session: Feb 5 & 12, after Worship**

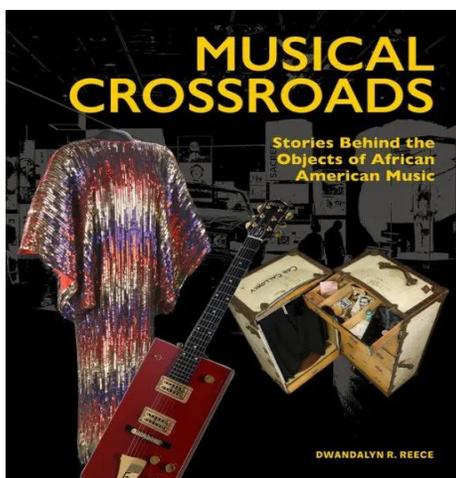
Join us February 5 and 12 for Bible Workbench, held after worship, a “taste and see” opportunity to experience the First Church Bible study offering. We will meet in the Chapel (and on Zoom) at noon, using the same zoom link as the worship service. Bible Workbench is a long-running weekly Bible study that typically meets before the worship service on Sunday

mornings. Each week we read a Bible passage (one of the lectionary readings for that week) together with a small set of related secondary readings. We have been a small but hardy band of seekers who come together with a shared sense of curiosity about the Bible and a desire to connect it to our world today. We would be delighted to have more participants. **NOTE:** No prior knowledge of the Bible is needed. We suspect that the Sunday morning time slot may make it hard for interested people to attend, so we are meeting for a couple of weeks after worship to see if that time brings in more participants. Andrew Hamilton, who convenes the group, will send the reading for this coming Sunday to the full congregation, so everyone can get a sense of what the material is. Please consider joining us either or both Sundays; all are welcome!

## Lenten Book Circles

Our Lenten book circles offer an opportunity to focus on racial justice in a cohort (small group) with rotating facilitation. Book selections will be announced with a link to sign-up for the book of your choice. These circles will meet weekly during the six weeks of Lent on a date/time determined by the group. Each book circle will include members of our Antiracism Committee who will convene the first gathering and participate throughout.

## February 26 at noon: Book Talk with Dwandalyn R. Reece



Join us in-person in the sanctuary or on Zoom for an illustrated Book Talk and Celebration of the new book, [Musical Crossroads: Stories Behind the Objects of African American Music](#) edited by Dwandalyn R. Reese, published in association with the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institution. Dwan is associate director for Curatorial Affairs at the National Museum of African American History and Culture and has more than thirty years of experience as a scholar, performer, grantor, and curator, including twelve years as the NMAAHC's Curator of Music and Performing Arts from 2009 to 2021. She curated the Museum's *Musical Crossroads* exhibition, which won the Secretary's Research Prize in 2017; co-curated the Museum's

grand opening music festival, *Freedom Sounds: A Community Celebration* (2016), the *Smithsonian Year of Music* (2019), and the *Smithsonian Folklife Festival Program, Rhythm and Blues: Tell It Like It Is* (2011); served as contributing producer on the Smithsonian Anthology of Hip-Hop and Rap (2021); and co-hosted the first season of the award-winning NMAAHC and SiriusXM podcast series, *All Music is Black Music* (2021). As chair of Smithsonian Music, she leads a pan-institutional effort to raise the profile of the Smithsonian's music collections and is frequently called upon to talk about a variety of issues, including such topics as performing arts collections, exhibitions and museums, African American music history and performance, gender and vocal performance, musical theatre, the Harlem Renaissance, blackface minstrelsy and stereotypes, and American popular entertainment. As described on the cover, this book is : *A vibrantly illustrated exploration of 400 years of African American musical culture.*

*"A bravely and deeply researched, rich and relevant book, it addresses the critical crossroads of ritual, creativity, object art, and its cultural value and meaning."—Dr. William*

*(Bill) Banfield, Professor Emeritus and founding director of Black Music Culture Studies, Berklee College of Music*

*"Black music has been going on forever: longer than me, longer than you, longer than most people know. But some people know. This book, managed by a museum and powered by love, looks at African American music over the centuries and through the people, instruments, and objects that made it happen. There is no future without the past."—Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson, Academy Award-winning filmmaker, drummer, DJ, producer, New York Times best-selling author, and member of The Roots*

*"This book is essential reading for anyone interested in the history of African American music, its relationship to the formation of American identity and its larger impact on global communities."—Tammy L. Kernodle University Distinguished Professor of Music, Miami University (Ohio) Immediate Past President, Society for American Music*

### **March 5: Community Organizing session with [Washington Interfaith Network \(WIN\)](#) & Neighboring Congregations**

Join First Church and other local congregations, such as Table Church, for a one-hour "taste and see" session with WIN about multi-racial community organizing among faith communities to build power for social justice.

### **March 12-26: "Radical Rest" series with Rev. Amanda on the spiritual practice of Sabbath**

This after-worship series will explore Sabbath rest as an antidote to a world preoccupied with striving and grasping. We will explore Sabbath as an invitation to wonder, delight and gratitude that renews our connection to the rhythm of life through tangible spiritual practices.

### **April 23:**

#### **❖ Inquirer's Gathering**

Our pastoral staff and Outreach & Membership Commission will host this after-worship gathering in the chapel and on Zoom as a time for newcomers to learn more about First Church, including how to join, and share what is bringing them through our doors. All newcomers are welcome to attend.

#### **❖ Eco-Theology Nurture with Rev. Kaeley McEvoy**

As we mark Earth Sunday, following worship Rev. Kaeley will lead a conversation about eco-theology open to all.

### **Late Spring-Early Summer: White Privilege Discussion Series with Rev. Karen Byrne**

This will be a six-week evening series to help white people deepen their analysis of white privilege, the many ways whiteness is rewarded at the expense of people of color. This series will likely take place in the Byrne home, the schedule is to be determined. To inquire or express interest, please contact Karen at [revkarenbyrne@gmail.com](mailto:revkarenbyrne@gmail.com).

### **Sermon Talk-Back**

Join Rev. Amanda or a guest preacher after worship to dive into a deeper theological discussion about Sunday's sermon facilitated by a member of our Adult Education & Formation team; dates to be determined.

## Facilities



**Centennial Conversations -- An Equitable City – Realities, Opportunities and Choices.** February 11, at 1:00 pm.

Free. [www.committeeof100.net/](http://www.committeeof100.net/)



**Friday Morning Music Club**

**Downtown DC Chamber Series,** February 17, at noon. These hour-long programs feature a variety of instrumental and vocal ensembles performing an

eclectic repertoire ranging from well-known favorites to rarely heard gems across the centuries—including the 21st! Free. Repeats on March 17, April 21, May 19, & June 16. <https://fmmc.org/>



**Winter Oasis,** February 18, at 3:00 pm. Join Relic on a musical journey through the depths of winter! This program leans heavily on the mysterious and austere power of German sacred baroque repertoire to explore the external darkness and internal warmth we experience at the heart of winter. Free! <https://relicensemble.org/>



**Ciaconna -- Bach on the Solo Violin,** March 3 at 7:00 pm. Violinist Rachell Ellen Wong, is a rising star on both the historical performance and modern violin stages. \$10-35.

[www.bachconsort.org](http://www.bachconsort.org)

## Outreach and Membership

### Updating Our Church Directory: Please Read!

In February we invite the whole church to access our online church directory to update your photograph and/or contact information in anticipation of a new 2023 Directory coming out in March. Please note it is helpful if you are able to add both a personal photograph and a family photograph for our directory. [Click here \(https://servantkeeper.com/member-portal/firstuccdc/login\)](https://servantkeeper.com/member-portal/firstuccdc/login) to access the directory, using the email address you list for yourself in the directory to login (note: you can click "forgot my password" if you need to create a new

one). Please note that a pdf form of the directory will be available in March, along with print copies. If you would like a print copy, you can pick one up at church on a Sunday morning or, if needed, ask our administrative assistant to mail one to you by contacting them at [churchoffice@firstuccdc.org](mailto:churchoffice@firstuccdc.org).

## **Seeking Usher Volunteers**

As the number of people attending worship in person increases to include newcomers interested in learning about First Church, the Outreach & Membership Commission is seeking volunteers to usher. In cold weather, we also welcome more of our neighbors living on the streets who are cold and hungry. Ushers welcome members, friends, and newcomers who arrive for worship and, along with our Sunday Morning Coordinator Kemmesha Thomas, also welcome those seeking warmth and resources. Go to [TinyURL.com/FirstUsher](https://TinyURL.com/FirstUsher) to sign up to serve as an usher and become a face of welcome at First Church. We need 2-3 ushers per Sunday and have a written list of instructions to orient you.



## **Social Action & Awareness**

### **February 2023 Second Sunday Offering**

The Second Sunday offering on February 12th will be split between Thrive DC and Seabury's Age-in-Place Program. [Thrive DC](#) works to prevent and end homelessness by providing vulnerable individuals a comprehensive range of services: meals, showers, laundry, and more, to help stabilize their lives. Originally founded and housed at First Church from 1979–2009 (when it was known as the Dinner Program for Homeless Women), Thrive DC is comprehensive, professionally staffed, and bilingual, now located at 1525 Newton Street, NW. It is unique in providing the last available safety net for people facing economic crisis and housing instability while also providing the first step toward independence for people experiencing extended periods of homelessness.

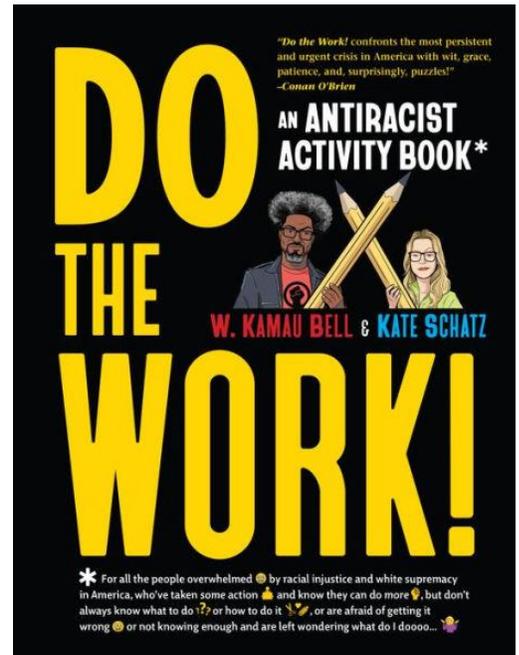


[Seabury's Age-In-Place](#) program specializes in affordable services, including housing, for seniors in the Washington, DC area. These services give them the independence to live with dignity. Seabury offerings include congregational resources and LGBTQ+ programs.

Please give generously for the benefit of these two programs.

## Lenten Book Circles: Sign Up Now!

During the forty days of Lent (beginning February 22), our congregation commits to deepening our faith journey with the spiritual practice of community learning through Lenten Book Circles. Each circle focuses on a book rooted in antiracism and provides space for a community circle (gathering virtually) to share facilitation, dialogue, and personal reflections. Books range from a novel to an activity book, theology, and beyond. Each circle will include 5-10 individuals, including a virtual host or co-hosts from the Antiracism Committee who helped to select these books. Go to [Tinyurl.com/LentBookCircles](https://tinyurl.com/LentBookCircles) to sign up. Thank you to all who are making this a spiritual practice in Lent as we prepare our hearts for the journey to the cross, the tomb, and beyond into resurrection.



## Warm Clothes Still Needed for Drop-In Center

First Church is continuing its drive to keep our neighbors warm. Whatever you can donate is welcome; socks and gloves are especially needed. Look for the big orange box at church.

Suggested items (like-new or gently used):

- Men's and women's winter coats
- Warm sweatshirts, fleeces and sweaters
- Warm trousers, sweatpants, jeans
- Winter hats, scarves, neck and face-warmers
- Winter gloves
- Winter shoes/boots
- Socks
- Hand- and foot-warmers



Folks are mostly adults, of all ages and sizes; large/XL items are especially needed. If you have any questions, contact Janneke at [janneke1018@gmail.com](mailto:janneke1018@gmail.com). Thank you!

## Worship Commission

### Guest Preacher on Feb. 12: Rev. Thomas L. Bowen



Rev. Thomas L. Bowen is the Earl L. Harrison Minister of Social Justice at the historic Shiloh Baptist Church of Washington, DC and has faithfully served that congregation in various capacities since July 2002. He was ordained to preach the Gospel at the Mount Zion Baptist Church of Oberlin, Ohio and serves that congregation as an adjunct preacher.

Rev. Bowen is also the Director of African American Strategic Engagement in the Executive Office of DC Mayor Muriel Bowser, where he serves as the Director of both the Mayor's Office on African American Affairs and the Mayor's Office of Religious Affairs. He is considered the chief advocate and voice of both the African American community and the faith community in the District of Columbia. He is often called "DC's Pastor."

Rev. Bowen is an inaugural member of American Indivisible's Public Leaders for Inclusion Council, a leadership program for trailblazing public servants to explore practices and policies that challenge

anti-Muslim bigotry and other forms of hate while building inclusion and social resilience in their communities.

Rev. Bowen has been a contributing panelist for the Washington Post's On Faith/Local Section and a contributor to the Huffington Post's Black Voices. He has served as the Religion Editor for the Washington Informer newspaper and was once a National Correspondent for PoliticallyBlack.Com where he had the pleasure to interview then-Illinois State Senator Barack Obama.

Rev. Bowen has held several positions in advocacy and nonprofit communities including Senior Religious Advocate for the Children's Defense Fund and Senior Field Organizer for its Black Community Crusade for Children, Executive Director of the Midnight Basketball Leagues of Lorain County, Inc., Project Coordinator for the Urban Child Research Center at Cleveland State University, and Assistant Director of the Upward Bound Program at Oberlin College.

He holds the distinction of having been one of the youngest persons ever to be elected to a school board in the State of Ohio, when he won a seat on the Elyria City Schools' Board of Education. He was overwhelmingly reelected for a second four-year term.

Rev. Bowen is a graduate of Morehouse College, where he was a Ford Foundation Scholar, and received his ministerial training from The Divinity School at the University of Chicago.

Rev. Bowen has received numerous awards and recognitions, including a Certificate of

Special Congressional Recognition from U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH), a Proclamation for Outstanding Achievement from the Ohio House of Representatives. Ebony Magazine once named him one of the 50 Leaders of Tomorrow. He has participated in group study exchange trips to Cuba, France, Guatemala, Japan, and Israel.

A native of Lorain County, Ohio, he has called Washington, DC home for over 20 years and currently resides in the historic Trinidad neighborhood in Northeast.

## **Seeking in Lent: Honest Questions for Deeper Faith**



Ash Wednesday marks the start of the Lenten season, a time when we prepare our hearts to receive the mystery of resurrection. Some pray, fast, or give of their time, talent or treasure as a form of preparation. This year our worship theme in Lent will be "Seeking: Honest Questions for Deeper Faith." As we engage scriptural stories of Jesus encountering people who are seeking, assumptions are disrupted, new perspectives revealed, and mystery honored. This year's Lenten

worship services will each engage a question: Can these bones live? How do we begin again? Who will you listen to? Together we will live the questions, discerning what God is seeking within and among us. Each week we will extinguish one candle as we move towards the cross. Join us in Lent as we honor the difficult questions of faith.

### **Ash Wednesday Service: Feb. 22 at 7:00 PM**

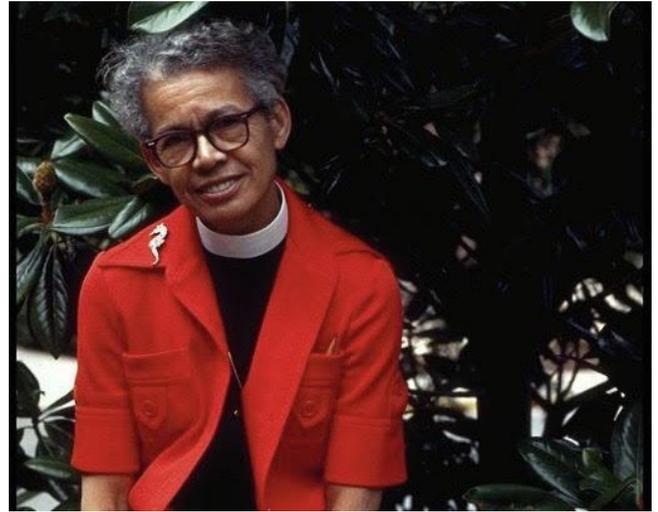


Join us in the sanctuary or on Zoom for our Ash Wednesday service on February 22nd at 7:00 PM as we participate in an ancient ritual that reminds us of the frailty of human living and our need for healing—the imposition of the ashes. This service marks the start of our six-week Lenten journey together as we prepare our hearts to receive the mystery of Easter. The service will feature personal sharing, scripture reading, and contemplative music. If you plan to join us by Zoom,

please prepare your own ashes or oil for the service. For guidance, check out [Rev. Amanda's video](#) from 2021 explaining the meaning of the ashes and offering options for making your own or opting to use anointing oil as a way to observe this ritual from home.

### **Black History Month in Worship: Walking with Pauli Murray**

Last year we began the practice of walking with a blessed Black ancestor in worship during Black History month when we selected Howard Thurman. This year we will walk with the [Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray](#), who lived one of the most remarkable lives of the twentieth century as a profound poet, ground-breaking lawyer, friend and confidant to Eleanor Roosevelt, ordained Episcopal priest, and one who defied the gender constructs of the day. In particular, we will focus on the theme of "[Hope is a song in a weary throat](#)," the title of one of Murray's poems. If you are new to Pauli Murray, consider taking the time to view the documentary, [My Name is Pauli Murray](#) available through Amazon Prime.



## Music Ministry

### **Friday Morning Music Club Downtown Chamber Series: Feb 17 at 12:00 pm (Free of cost)**

#### **Program:**

- Faure: Trio in D Minor, op. 120. **Jung-Yoon Lee**, piano; **Eunju Kwak**, violin; **Janet Frank**, cello
  - Scarlatti: Sonata in B Minor, K. 87. Beethoven: Bagatelles, op. 126: IV. Presto. Liszt: *Années de pèlerinage*, Vol. 3: IV. *Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este*. **Simon Finlow**, piano
  - Kaspar Kummer: Duo No. 1, op. 46a. Hector Villa-Lobos: Choros No. 2, W197. **Andy Tangborn**, clarinet; **Terri Manolio**, flute
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## February 2023

### Sunday, February 5

9:00 am Our Whole Lives  
9:30 am Choir Rehearsal  
10:30 am Sunday School  
10:30 am Worship Service  
11:30 am Coffee Hour  
12:00 pm Bible Workbench

### Tuesday, February 7

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

### Wednesday, February 8

1:30 pm Choir Rehearsal

### Sunday, February 12

9:00 am Our Whole Lives  
9:30 am Choir Rehearsal  
10:30 am Sunday School  
10:30 am Worship Service  
11:30 am Coffee Hour  
12:00 pm Bible Workbench

### Wednesday, February 22

12:15 pm Break Away Meditation  
4:30 pm Choir Rehearsal  
7:00 pm Ash Wednesday Worship Service

### Saturday, February 25

9:30 am - noon Choir Rehearsal

### Sunday, February 26

9:00 am Our Whole Lives  
9:30 am Bible Workbench  
9:30 am Choir Rehearsal  
10:30 am Sunday School  
10:30 am Worship Service  
11:30 am Coffee Hour  
12:00 pm Book Talk with Dwan Reece

### Tuesday, February 14

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

### Wednesday, February 15

12:15 pm Break Away Meditation  
1:30 pm Choir Rehearsal

### Sunday, February 19

9:30 am Bible Workbench  
9:30 am Choir Rehearsal  
10:30 am Sunday School  
10:30 am Worship Service

### Tuesday, February 21

1:00 pm Staff Meeting  
6:00 pm Drop-In Center  
8:00 pm Young Adult Group

### Tuesday, February 28

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

Director of Music Ministry – Leela Koilpillai

Sexton – Ms. Ines Marquez

Members in Discernment –Lynaya Morris, LaTayna Purnell

945 G Street NW, Washington DC 20001 Phone: 202.628.4317 • [www.firstuccdc.org](http://www.firstuccdc.org)

