

GABRIEL'S HORN



First Congregational United Church of Christ

November 2025

Beloved Community,

I have pondered lately, what does it mean to live generously in tumultuous times? What does it mean to cultivate kindness in an era of cruelty? What does it mean to nurture open-hearted spirituality amidst the cynicism of a crumbling democracy? And what does it mean to claim a faith that has been hijacked for harm? Our faith seems, at times, naïve—a flickering spark in the shadow of the powers and principalities of our day. Yet I am reminded of Paul's words to the church at Corinth: "God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom; God's weakness is stronger than human strength. Consider your own call, siblings: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world." So we cling to our faith and its anchoring values with urgency, trusting that the way we nurture our spirits in community matters profoundly.



This is why we do not hesitate to invite you to "Dream God's Dream" this stewardship season, despite a demoralizing government shut-down and economic uncertainty. If there is one community worthy of covenant, it is the body of Christ. If there is one practice worthy of your heart, it is Sunday worship. If there is one mission commendable for the giving of your gifts of time, talent, and treasure—it is the one we share as a joyful and justice-seeking church in the heart of our nation's capital. We trust that in giving, you will receive. In sharing, you will be enriched. That is the surprising grace of God's economy. This month, our second Sunday special offering will create a fund to support federal workers in our congregation, because we know that together we can weather the difficult storms which we cannot withstand alone.

This month will be filled with rich worship services—All Saints Sunday, when you can bring a photograph of a departed one for our worship table; the baptism of Malachi Simmons; Commitment Sunday with Peter Byrne preaching the sermon; and the launch of a new year in the Christian calendar with the first Sunday of Advent on November 30. We invite you to come and allow our music, prayers, testimonies and sacraments to minister to your weary

heart. We will invite lament and healing, joy and anticipation. Join us. Worship will be followed by a study of the Bible as a handbook for resisting tyranny, a two-week series; and a nurture on the practice of prayer, led by Rev. Amanda. Our children will begin rehearsals for the Christmas Pageant, serve at Tommy's Pantry, and enjoy a movie night with Peoples Congregational UCC. The First Church Choir and instrumentalists will begin rehearsing for our Cantata Sunday. There is something for everyone, and the precious gift of your presence is truly valued here as together, we "Dream God's Dream" of beloved community.

In Grace,
Rev. Amanda

Council Capsule

Council Capsule: October 2025

Council convened on October 14th for the ninth meeting of the 2025 term. Key topics included the following:

- A recap of the fall retreat and discussion of potential future retreats.
- Preparation for stewardship season.
- Approval of the asking budget for 2026.
- Approval of the nominations committee.
- Approval of new members.

If you have questions, please reach out to Dwan Reece, Moderator (dreece111@verizon.net) or Peter Tracey, Assistant Moderator (peter.l.tracey@gmail.com).

Submitted by Michael Enseki-Frank, Clerk

Christian Education

Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities at Tommy's Pantry

We have some wonderful opportunities to serve at Tommy's Pantry in November and December. We have found Tommy's Pantry (tommyspantry.org) to be an excellent organization that helps us love our neighbor through serving individuals and families who are facing hunger and food insecurity. Many of the families that Tommy's Pantry serve are immigrants. Tommy's Pantry is located at the Church of the Ascension (633 Sligo Road, Silver Spring, MD, 20910). Please sign up [here](#) for any of the times listed below and/or email Rev. Sam if you have any questions at mcferran.sam@gmail.com.



- November 11 from 6am-8am Tommy's Pantry Distribution (Grades 5 +)
- November 8 from 10am-12pm Tommy's Pantry Packing (Grades K+)
- December 13 from 10am-12pm Tommy's Pantry Packing (Grades K+)
- December 20 from 6am-8am Tommy's Pantry Distribution (Grades 5 +)

Movie and Game Night: November 15 at 6pm

On Saturday, November 15 from 6pm to 9pm, please join the Children and Youth of First Church and People's Congregational for a fun night of movies, games, snacks and joy! We will be meeting in the Community Hall, Chapel and the CE Suite. Email Rev. Sam at mcferran.sam@gmail.com if you have any questions/ We hope you can make it!



Christmas Pageant, December 7th

First Church is excited for this year's Christmas Pageant! This wonderful tradition allows the children and youth to joyfully tell and embody the story of Christ's birth, the message of God's love and hope to all of us. This year the theme is "Home."

Schedule

- 1) First Reading – November 16th during Sunday School
- 2) Rehearsal – December 6th, 8:30 – 10:00 in Sanctuary
- 3) Performance – December 7th (Arrive by 9:30)

Please fill out this [Christmas Pageant Form](#) and email Rev. Sam if you have any questions. We so hope your child or youth can join us!



Advent Nurture Series: The Hopes & Fears of All the Years

November 30, December 14, December 21, 2025

*And in the dark streets shineth, the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the year are met in thee tonight.*



Join the Rev. Barbara Gerlach on November 30, December 14, and December 21 for an Advent nurture series featuring the personal sharing of members of our congregation as we reflect on the theme "The Hopes & Fears of All the Years", from, "O Little Town of Bethlehem. This series will take place following worship from noon - 1:00 in the Community Hall and on Zoom. We will reflect on our hopes and fears, how hope meets fear and lifts, shifts, enlarges us and opens a way. The leading characters in the

stories of Advent and Christmas--Mary, Joseph, John the Baptist, the shepherds, and the magi--all experienced fear. But their fear did not stop them from responding to the voice, vision, dream, challenge before them. In saying "yes" to God, they found the courage and encouragement, comfort and joy, the strength and resolve to follow their call. By sharing our stories, we cultivate the courage to also say "yes" to God in fearful time, moving from fear to resilient hope. This Advent, we open ourselves the 'good news' which is louder than our fear. We hope you'll join us.

November 30

Sharing: Jim Riker, Roz Grisby, Trevor Bakker

December 14

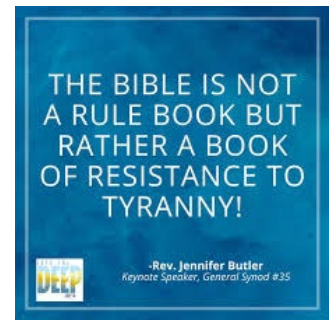
Sharing: Angie Ofori Atta, Kenneth Ofori Atta, Anne Mascolino

December 21

Sharing: Jody Kenney, Mike Kenny, Diana Gomez de Molina

The Bible as a Handbook to Resist Tyranny: November 9 & 16

Join Rev. Amanda following worship on November 9th & 16th for a study of the Bible through the lens of liberation. She will introduce tools and resources for biblical interpretation in authoritarian times. Where can we excavate messages of justice and resistance? Join us for a rich conversation in the Community Hall and on Zoom.



What is Prayer: November 23



Join Rev. Amanda after worship on November 23rd to explore the practice of prayer. Why do we pray? Does it change anything? What are the forms of prayer and how can we embrace it as a spiritual practice? Rev. Amanda will share a variety of contemplative forms of prayer and resources to support your personal practice of it. This discussion will take place in the Community Hall and on Zoom.

Care of Parish

Save the Date for Upcoming Care of Parish Events!

November 2: Church Potluck immediately following worship. Bring your favorite fall- themed dish to share. We encourage everyone to attend. Vegan and gluten free options are especially appreciated.

December 7: The Great First Church Cookie Showcase – bring a cookie (or other hand-held baked treat) to share and enjoy sampling everyone else's! Bragging rights will be liberally distributed. Extra treats will be left for the Drop-In Center. Leave your contributions in the kitchen before church. Please mark anything that has nuts, is vegan or gluten free.

January 25: Annual Meeting with a soup lunch youth trip fundraiser. Care of Parish and our youth will provide soup, bread and dessert prior to our Annual Meeting. There will be vegan and gluten free options. This is a fundraising event for our youth, so come prepared with some small bills to place in the collection vase.

Coffee Hour

Thank you all for supporting our Coffee Hour time this year. It's a vital ministry of hospitality to visitors to our church, and your support helps ensure that the post-worship time continues to be a warm and welcoming space for all.

We will begin sign ups for 2026 this month. If you want to get ahead, you can go to [this link](#) and sign up for the Sundays that work best for you. We encourage everyone who is able to sign up at least once per 6-month period.

If you're looking for additional information on our Coffee Hour Tradition you can go

- [here](#) for background information
- or [here](#) for instructions

If you have any questions, please email us at copfirstuccdc@gmail.com.

Facilities

New Assisted Listening Devices Are Here!

We have four body packs that you can clip to your belt or stick in a pocket and 3 headsets and 3 loops. If you'd like to use one, please visit Dwight at the AV console in the balcony.

Use of the headsets is obvious. The loops work by plugging the 2 ends (earphone jacks) into the two ports in the bodypack, put it around your neck, and it should automatically connect to your hearing aid if it is [telecoil/Tcoil](#) compatible. After the worship service, please bring the device up to the balcony and place it on the sound board or hand it to Dwight. Please do **NOT** just leave it somewhere on the first floor!



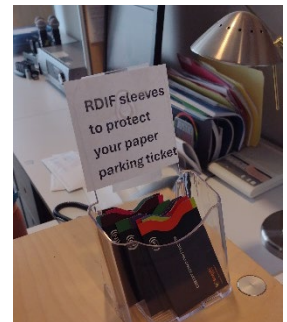
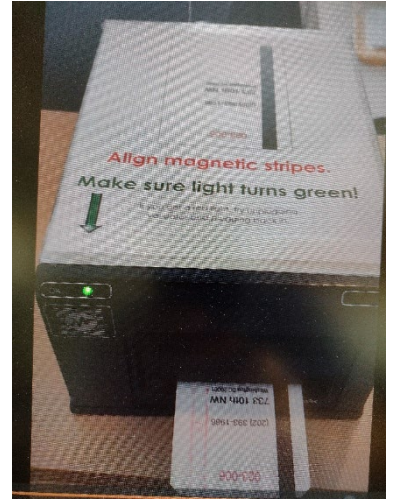
If you are going to a nurture or similar event in the Community Hall after worship, hold onto the device and when you get to the Hall, hold the up and down buttons down together for 5 seconds until a room name shows in the display, then use the down button till Community comes up in the display, then press the button on the top of the bodypack to confirm. And at the end of the nurture give the device to Dwight or leave it on the Sanctuary lightboard.

Let us know what you think of the new devices!

Succeeding with the Parking Validator

We have had many problems with the parking validator over the last 18 months. We replaced it twice with a remanufactured unit at a cost of \$950 each time. We've had numerous repair calls on it. In order to avoid problems in the future, the Facilities Commission encourages you to follow these steps:

1. When the validator is brought downstairs, place it on the desk, next to the window, facing south. There is an outlet on the wall right there to plug it into. Placing it on the desk will make it easier to insert tickets and to confirm that the light turned green. On potluck Sundays, put it on the table next to the coffee pot and use the outlet on the back side of the stone column.
2. Try to keep tickets flat and away from cards with magnetic strips. We purchased RFID Blocking Sleeves for folks to use to protect paper parking tickets from contact with other cards and to help keep it flat in your purse or pocket. These are located in the office by the validator for people to take. We will purchase more if necessary as they are not expensive
3. Align the ticket as indicated on the top of the machine: mag stripe up and on the right side.
4. Gently insert your ticket, listen for it to go back and forth and **WATCH** for the light on the front to turn **green** indicating that your ticket has been validated. If you get a red light, please try again as it sometimes turns green on a second pass.
5. When moving the validator, please do so with care. Don't try to juggle it with other items, don't shake it back and forth, don't bang it down on the desk, keep it flat if possible, etc.



I ask that you follow these steps so that we can avoid spending \$8,000 for a brand-new validator which is likely the next step if problems persist.

I thank you in advance,
Byron Adams, Building Manager

Coming up this November



[Capriccio Baroque](#) presents a **Harpichord Concert with Carole Cerasi**. November 1 at 8:00 pm. Small concerts that hearken back to the musical soirées of earlier times; they're convivial, social events where the communication between musicians and guests is direct and personal.

[The Choral Arts Society of Washington](#) presents **Undas**. November 2 at 5:00 pm. The experience begins with a pre-concert reception with Filipino food and altars for concert-goers to bring pictures of loved ones who have passed. Afterwards, experience music that presents the feelings of love, loss, grief, acceptance, and celebration of life.



[Washington Bach Consort](#) presents **The Cryes of London**. November 13 at 7:00 pm. The Consort's superb vocalists will be joined by a viol consort in a program that offers the beauty of Gibbons' finest works, led by Artistic Director Dana Marsh. www.bachconsort.org

[EmpowerDC](#) **Membership Meeting**. November 15, 11:30 am. Empower DC advances racial, economic and environmental justice by organizing the political power of DC's lowest income residents.



Friday Morning Music Club

[Friday Morning Music Club](#) presents their **Downtown DC Chamber Series**. November 21, noon. Featuring a variety of instrumental and vocal ensembles.

[Heritage Signature Chorale](#) **Concert**, November 22 at 8:00 pm. Experience the music that embodies our mission, showcasing African American composers.



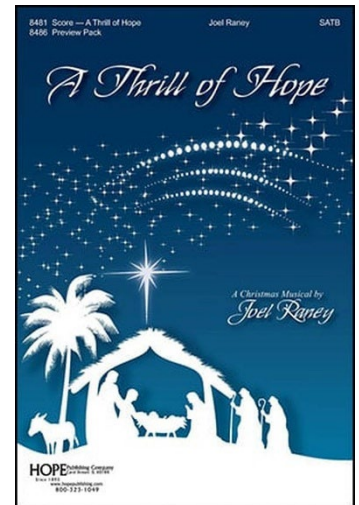
Music Ministry

Invitation to Participate in the Christmas Cantata

As the holiday season approaches, our choir is preparing something special: *A Thrill of Hope*, a Christmas cantata by Joel Raney. This beautiful work blends familiar carols with a contemporary flair — and, of course, those bright, festive “Christmas-y” bells that capture the joy of the season.

While we don't currently have all the bells and instruments featured in the score, we're working to bring the music to life. Our ensemble will include flute, oboe, French horn, violin, and cello, among others. Even if we can't fill every part, we'll do our best to create a rich, full sound for this special occasion.

I'm currently reaching out to recruit musicians and singers — and I warmly invite anyone from First Church who has hidden musical talents to join us! If you are interested in participating, contact me at firstchurchdcmusic@gmail.com. Whether you play one of the instruments mentioned or love to sing, we would be thrilled to have you participate. After all, it's the holiday season — the more, the merrier!



On a personal note, when I was in college, I played flute in a large-scale Christmas cantata. I still remember the long rehearsals and the excitement that filled the air. Even now, whenever I hear that piece — especially its opening notes — I'm transported back to that wonderful time, surrounded by friends, music, and the spirit of Christmas.

I hope this cantata project will bring same sense of meaning, joy, and togetherness.

Submitted by Ulung Tanoto, Director of Music Ministry

Stewardship

Why will I support the church this year?

Fredda Sparks shared these moving words during last year's Stewardship season. They hit the mark as assuredly this year as last. The Finance Commission wishes to share this again with our thanks to Fredda.

I could tell you about how much attending worship, serving on various commissions, learning from so many wise folks, and making deep friendships has meant to me over the last twenty-five years. All true. And all good reasons to continue my support.

But what about now? What's different about now? And why do I feel that it is more important than ever to make sure there continues to be a thriving First Church community at Tenth and G?



Because I'm worried. I'm afraid that we are facing what feels like an existential threat to what is good and true in our country. And I have realized that being a part of a fellowship of people who reach for the same future that I do means more to me than I can say. It is something I want to preserve and protect and pass on to those who come after. We have been through some tough years with problems -- notably Covid -- which have affected our finances

negatively. Our response, enhanced by Rev. Amanda's leadership, has been a vigorous attempt to grow our membership. And it's working! Just look around the sanctuary and Zoom on Sunday mornings. You can see -- and feel -- a new vitality, a new enthusiasm, a renewed sense of purpose as we look to the future.

Let's support this renewal. With our prayers. Our presence. Our hard work. And our treasure.

Please join me in pledging -- and increasing your pledge of you can -- this year. Together we can make it happen.

Fredda Sparks

Social Action & Awareness

Second Sunday Offering: Federal Workers Fund + Food Justice DMV



This November, we invite you to give generously to a new fund we are creating for federal employees during the government shutdown. This fund will provide direct financial assistance or a loan up to the amount of \$500 to help those facing the uncertainty of when they will collect their next paycheck. We also offer a [Resource List](#) curated for federal workers, featuring special offers and additional avenues of support in this time. Any gifts received for this fund that are not disbursed will go to [Food Justice DMV](#), a valued partner organization distributing and delivering food boxes to those facing food insecurity, including immigrant families. We hope you will give generously as we seek to support those in our midst who have given their lives to public service. All needs and requests can go directly to Rev. Amanda or Rev. Sam and will be confidential. We truly need one another in these times and trust that God provides.

Worship

All Saints Sunday, November 2: Bring Photograph of Departed Loved Ones

On November 2nd, as we mark All Saints Sunday, we invite you to bring a framed photograph of a beloved, departed one. You can place your photograph on the worship table (among the votive candles) before worship, during the prelude, or during the passing of the peace. Those worshiping from home are invited to set your table with a photograph, votive candle, and the elements of bread and cup for communion Sunday.

What Do You Fear? Insisting on Hope this Advent



Beginning November 30, Advent ushers in the holy season of anticipation as we prepare our heart to receive the mystery of incarnation through the birth of Jesus Christ into the world. It also marks the start of a new year in the Christian calendar. During Advent, each week we light a candle in our Advent wreath representing hope, peace, joy, and love. We encourage you to create your own Advent wreath with candles at home and to light the candles week by week over meals or in your meditative time. [Click here](#) to view Rev. Amanda's DIY video from a few years ago explaining the tradition of Advent wreaths and how to make one. This year's Advent theme asks "What do you fear?" even as it invites us to show up with courage. Advent devotionals will be available on Sundays in the narthex. With trembling hope, we insist that fear will not have the last word this Advent.

Hanging of the Greens: November 20

Please help us prepare for the Advent Season with our annual "Hanging of the Greens" on Thursday, November 20 from 6:30pm to 7:30pm in the Sanctuary. This lovely tradition is the first step in helping us as we prepare for the birth of Christ, the arrival of God's love and hope for all of us. "Hanging of the Greens" includes decorating the balcony and chancel with greens, wreaths and a tree, and eating pizza with good friends. All are invited to participate, including children. Please email Rev. Sam to RSVP at Mcferran.sam@gmail.com.

Sign-Up to Serve as a Scripture Reader this Advent - Epiphany

[Click here](#) to sign up to serve as a scripture reader or liturgist in worship this holy season of Advent and Christmas through Epiphany. We welcome members and friends, local and far-flung, adults, youth, and children to participate. Your voice helps make us who we are, so please take a moment to sign up. Our worship is enriched by your participation.



This Month at First Church: November 2025

Sunday, November 2: All Saints Sunday

9:30 am Bible Workbench
 10:30 am Worship Service
 & Sunday School
 11:45 am Community Potluck

Tuesday, November 4

10:30 am Staff Meeting
 6:00 pm Drop-In Center
 7:00 pm Worship Commission

Wednesday, November 4

12:15 pm Break Away Meditation
 7:00 pm Care of Parish Commission

Sunday, November 9

9:30 am Bible Workbench
 10:30 am Worship Service
 & Sunday School
 11:45 am Coffee Hour
 12:00 pm The Bible as a Handbook to Resist
 Tyranny

Monday, November 10

7:00 pm Finance Commission

Tuesday, November 11

10:30 am Staff Meeting
 6:00 pm Drop-In Center
 6:30 pm Council Meeting

Wednesday, November 12

12:15 pm Break Away Meditation
 6:30 pm O&M Commission

Saturday, November 15

6:00 pm Movie Night at First Church

Sunday, November 16

9:30 am Bible Workbench
 10:30 am Worship Service
 & Sunday School
 11:45 am Coffee Hour
 12:00 pm The Bible as a Handbook to Resist
 Tyranny

Tuesday, November 18

10:30 am Staff Meeting
 6:00 pm Drop-In Center

Wednesday, November 19

12:15 pm Break Away Meditation
 7:00 pm SAAC Commission
 7:00 pm Facilities Commission

Thursday, November 20

6:30 pm Hanging of the Greens

Sunday, November 23

9:30 am Bible Workbench
 10:30 am Worship Service
 & Sunday School
 11:45 am Coffee Hour
 12:00 pm "What is Prayer?"

Tuesday, November 25

10:30 am Staff Meeting
 6:00 pm Drop-In Center

Wednesday, November 26

12:15 pm Break Away Meditation

Thursday, November 27

& Friday November 28

Church Office closed for Thanksgiving

Sunday, November 30

9:30 am Bible Workbench
 10:30 am Worship Service
 & Sunday School
 11:45 am Coffee Hour
 12:00 pm Advent Nurture

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

Director of Music Ministry – Ulung Tanoto

Building Manager – Byron Adams

Administrative Assistant – Whitney McColley

Sexton – Ines Marquez

Members in Discernment – Lynaya Morris, LaTayna Purnell

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

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