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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

First Church Weekly Newsletter **November 21, 2025**

No matter where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

Worshiping Sundays at 10:30 am via Zoom and in person.

[Worship with Us](#)

[Announcements](#)

[Prayer List](#)

[Happening at First Church this Week](#)

[Reminders and Quick Links](#)

[Community Bulletin Board](#)

Worship with Us



Join us at 10:30 in the sanctuary or [click here](#) to join us by Zoom on this Gratitude Sunday as our Young Adults lead us in worship. Rev. Barbara Gerlach will offer the welcome. Patrick Darling-LaGamma will call us to worship. Michael Hopkins will share the poem "Mindful" by Mary Oliver. Reshmina William, Abigail Cipparone, and Michael Hopkins will offer special music with Ulung Tanoto. Casey Capsambelis and Kevin Anderson will serve as our scripture readers with focus texts from the 46th Psalm (God is our refuge) and Phlippians 4:4-13 (rejoice in the Lord always). Meditations on gratitude will be offered by Trevor Bakker, Abigail Cipparone, and Michael Enseki-Frank. Rev. Barbara will also lead us in the prayers of the people. Join us!

Our children will begin the morning worshipping with us in the sanctuary. Following the passing of the peace, they will move to the Christian Education wing for Sunday School. The nursery will be open throughout the morning.

Following worship, join us in the lobby for coffee and an extended fellowship time.

This week's worship folder is available online [here](#).

Announcements

Drop In Center Thanksgiving Meal Tuesday November 25

First Church members are invited to help present the annual home-cooked Thanksgiving meal for our Youth Drop-In Center guests on Tuesday evening November 25, 2025. You can volunteer to help onsite that evening and /or donate food items. Here's how you can help.

1. Sign up. Use this [Sign Up Genius form](#) to volunteer to set up, serve the meal or clean up, and/or to commit to bring a side dish, beverage or dessert. We are asking for donations of these favorite dishes to go with turkey provided by Sasha Bruce Youthwork: Collard greens, stuffing, macaroni and cheese, mashed potatoes, gravy, roasted brussels sprouts, corn bread, green beans, sweet potato pie, fruit pies, canned cranberry sauce. Please indicate on the sign up whether you will bring vegan, gluten free or dairy free version of the dish.
2. Pick up a single use covered aluminum roasting pan in the narthex after church. These ease reheating and cleanup.
3. Drop off items in the church kitchen Sunday Nov. 23 or on Tuesday Nov 25. Label each with item name and reheating instructions.
4. Volunteers: See you Nov 25 for 4:00-6:00 pm set up, 6:00-8:00 pm serving the meal, and 7:30-8:30 clean up.

Questions? Contact Kristen Wheeler (dessertlady@mac.com) or Gail Sonnemann (gsonnemann@gmail.com)

Daily Devotional: What do you Fear? Insisting on Hope this Advent

Beginning November 23, pick up a daily devotional booklet provided by A Sanctified Art, beckoning you deeper into the theme for Advent: "What do you Fear? Insisting on Hope this Advent." The devotional includes reflections, visual art, journal prompts, music, scripture readings and poetry; it is designed for adults and older youth. Enjoy this guide to the holy season as an invitation to deepen your spiritual practice of observing



Advent. Devotional booklets will be available at the usher's station on Sunday mornings.

Order Christmas Flowers



As we journey toward Christmas, we anticipate Christmas flowers decorating the sanctuary. We invite you to order a plant in honor or in memory of a loved one whose name will be listed in the worship folder. Please complete either the [digital form](#) or the paper form available on Sunday mornings. You may pay online via Vanco or PayPal (indicate Christmas Flowers) or you may mail a check (with Christmas Flowers on the memo line) to the church at 945 G Street NW, Washington, DC, 20001. The cost per plant is \$20. All orders must be received by December 14th.

Pastoral Care Coverage by Rev. Karen Byrne: Nov 23-28

During the week of Thanksgiving, as Rev. Amanda travels to Tennessee to support her mom's surgery and Rev. Sam travels to Spain with Ryan's soccer team, we give thanks that Rev. Karen Byrne will provide pastoral care coverage as needed. If you are experiencing a need or emergency that would benefit from pastoral support, please reach out to Karen by email or phone, her contact information can be found in the church directory.

Social Action & Awareness Survey: Please Complete



Following a robust conversation about our justice ministries at the fall retreat, our Social Action & Awareness Commission is conducting an asset-mapping of members and friends in our midst-- what justice issues interest you; what work are you already doing; to which organizations are you meaningfully connected? Please help us broaden our understanding of what "doing justice" through our congregation means to you by completing this survey no later than December 15th. This will help us plan for 2026, the 250th anniversary of

our nation's independence, as we focus on "Engaged Citizenship: Showing Up in Community." [Click here](#) to complete the survey today.

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

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

Join 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 in the Community Hall and on Zoom. We will reflect on our hopes and fears, how hope meets fear and lifts, shifts, 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, or 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 to the "good news" which is louder than our fear. We hope you'll join us.

- Sharing on 11/30: Jim Riker, Roz Grigsby, Trevor Bakker, Dian Permana
 - Sharing on 12/14: Angie Ofori Atta, Kenneth Ofori Atta, Anne Mascolino, Omari Hardy
 - Sharing on 12/21: Jody Kenney, Mike Kenney, Diana Gomez de Molina, Matt Dodge
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First Church Awarded a Trinity Grant

"We are pleased to inform you that First Congregational Church of Washington, DC has been awarded a grant of \$3,600 for 2026."

This is the message from Craig Peterson, Associate Conference Minister of the Central Atlantic Conference, in response to the proposal submitted by the First Church Outreach & Membership Commission for year two Trinity Grant funds. The funds will be used to make First Church more visible, both on our corner of 10th & G and in social media spaces, leading (we hope) to an increase in visitors and new members.

The year one grant of \$3,000 was used for Search Engine Optimization training for our staff, for the creation of the “invitation cards” which are already in use, and for the draft posters about which we have received congregational input.

Rev. Peterson commented: “Your thoughtful, visionary approach to getting the word out in these perilous times was greatly appreciated by the [grant] team.”

Stay tuned for further developments!

Submitted by Mary Pence, for the Outreach & Membership Commission

Succeeding with the Parking Validator

We are aware of frequent problems with the parking validator over the last 18 months. As a refresher, please be sure to follow these steps when validating your parking for the best chance at success:

1. Try to keep parking tickets flat, unbent, and away from cards with magnetic strips.
2. Align the ticket as indicated on the top of the machine: mag stripe up and on the right side.
3. Gently insert the 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.
4. When moving the validator, please do so with care.



New Assisted Listening Devices Are Here!

The Facilities Commission is pleased to announce that our new assisted listening devices are now available for use! See Dwight at the AV console in the balcony if you'd like to try one out. We have four body packs that you clip to your belt or stick in a pocket (we'll get more if we need them) and 3 headsets and 3 loops. 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. Let us know what you think of the new devices!



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.

SIGNAL--A New Way to Communicate at First Church

The First Church Council is establishing a Signal group as a way for members to share information about upcoming events and programming. The group will only be available to individuals who are a part of the First Church community and each member can decide whether to participate. Individuals who opt-in will be able to access different group chats, such as a group focused on Christian Education events, one focused on social action events, and one for Young Adults. These groups represent initial ideas for sub-groups, and the Council can add additional groups for other commissions or interest areas.

[Click here](#) for more information on the First Church Signal group and how to sign-up.

We look forward to rolling this out over the summer and will offer a Signal sign up tutorial on Homecoming Sunday in September. Please contact Dwan Reece (dreece111@verizon.net), Kristen Wheeler (dessertlady@mac.com) or Michael Enseki-Frank (michaelensekifrank@gmail.com) with any questions.

Prayer List

As we seek God and walk this journey of faith together, First Church gives thanks that we are a community that prays with and for one another. If you have a prayer request that you wish to be lifted up in service or included in the prayer list below, please email the church office (churchoffice@firstuccdc.org).

Prayers of comfort for the family of Abby Goodman-Johnson following the passing of her Great Aunts, Delores and Dot.

Prayers of healing for Gail Voss, Rev. Amanda's mother, as she undergoes surgery for trigeminal neuralgia.

Prayers of comfort and healing for Cristina Reyes, the mother of our sexton Ines Marquez, following a skin cancer diagnosis.

Prayers of comfort for the Dodge Family following the death of Matt's stepfather, Jay Miller.

Prayers of comfort for Garnell Yarbrough, following the death of his mother.

Prayers of comfort for Alyx Cheng and her family, following the death of her father, Alan, and of gratitude that he helped save the lives of three people through organ donation.

Prayers of comfort for Diana Gomez de Molina following the death of her wife, Mari Castellanos, beloved member of First Church.

Prayers of compassion and care for all federal workers facing chaos, cruelty, and uncertainty.

Prayers of courage and strength for our democracy.

Prayers of support for Dale Ostrander, living with memory loss.

Prayers that God's strength and wisdom surround the Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, the UCC's General Minister and President.

Prayers for peace and rebuilding in Gaza.

Prayers of mercy for the women of Afghanistan.

Prayers of peace and liberation for Sudan, Ukraine, Nicaragua, Cuba, and Haiti.

Prayers of mercy for families struggling to eat and make ends meet.

Prayers for Peoples Congregational UCC, our sibling congregation.

Prayers of strength for Rev. Laura Simmons and Rev. Diana Gomez de Molina, who serve as chaplains.

Happening at First Church this Week

Sunday, November 23

9:30 am - Bible Workbench
10:30 am - Worship Service &
Sunday School
11:45 am - Coffee Hour

Tuesday, November 25

6:00 pm - Drop-In Center
Thanksgiving Feast

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

Reminders and Quick Links

Upcoming Coffee Hour Hosts

November 23: Andy Raver, Jamey Moore, Kevin Anderson

November 30: Anisa Heming, Ed Chaffee, Nora Marsh

December 7: Mike Zawada, Michael Enseki-Frank, Thaddaeus Elliott

[Instructions for Coffee Hour](#)

[2025 Coffee Hour Host Schedule](#)

Quick Links

[This Week's Worship Folder](#)

[This Month's Gabriel's Horn](#)

[Worship Service Recordings on YouTube](#)

[Online Member Directory via Servant Keeper](#)

[First Church Usher Schedule](#)

Community Bulletin Board

The Community Bulletin Board serves as a place for members to share announcements or requests. Submissions should be [emailed to Whitney](#) no later than noon on Thursday to be

included in that week's newsletter. Announcements will be included as space allows.



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