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# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

## **First Church Weekly Newsletter** **February 6, 2026**

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

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

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**Worship with Us**



Join us at 10:30 in the sanctuary or [click here](#) to join us by Zoom this second Sunday in Black History Month as we welcome the Rev. Julio Hernandez, Executive Director of Congregation Action Network (CAN) into our pulpit. Susan Saudek will call us to worship with a reflection. Rev. Sam will lead a time with our children. The First Church Choir will sing the anthem "Total Praise" in memory of renowned composer Richard Smallwood, under the direction of Dennis Turner. Diana Gomez de Molina and Susan Anderson will serve as our scripture readers with focus texts from Isaiah 58:1-9 (the fast that I choose) and Matthew 5:13-20 (salt and light). Rev. Julio will preach a sermon entitled "Thawing of America: Salt & Light in a Wounded World." Sandy Sorensen will introduce the second Sunday special offering. Rev. Barbara Gerlach will lead us in prayers of the people. Guest trumpeter Freddie Dunn will offer musical gifts during the prelude, anthem, and postlude. 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 with Rev. Sam for Sunday school and confirmation class. Nursery care will be available for infants and toddlers throughout the morning.

Following worship, join us in the lobby for coffee and community. Then at noon, we invite you to participate in the nurture series led by Jim Riker and Sandy Sorensen, "Faith Communities' Role in Nonviolent Resistance" taking place upstairs in the Community Hall and on Zoom.

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

## Announcements

### **February Second Sunday Special Offering: One Great Hour of Sharing**

We invite you to give generously to our Second Sunday special offering in February, [One Great Hour of Sharing](#) (OGHS). OGHS is a special offering of the United Church of Christ in collaboration with other denominations. This year's theme is "our love offering to the world" in support of global partners addressing hunger, health, education, emergency relief, refugee ministries, and disaster response. Your gifts will go toward agriculture and food programs, water projects, disaster relief and economic development all over the world. Please give generously any time during the month of February.



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### **Starting This Sunday - Spring Nurture Series: Faith Communities' Role in Nonviolent Resistance**

Please join us for our **Spring Nurture Series** that will explore the visionary roles faith communities play in leading to successful nonviolent movements and “people power” initiatives for resistance and positive social change.



- What are the “six superpowers that faith communities bring to nonviolent struggle” (Stepan 2025), and how can citizen activism advance positive social change on key civic issues?
- How have faith communities historically engaged in visionary moral action made a significant impact?
- What are the lessons from faith communities in action for contemporary civic activism today?

This film and discussion series will draw directly on the perspectives of leading faith communities and civil society activists through documentary films and formal presentations of successful “people power” initiatives for social change

at the local, national, and global levels. The series will focus on the visionary pioneers of key people power movements, the role of faith communities in the Civil Rights and anti-War movements in the United States, the moral witness of faith leaders and the rise of people power movements in the Arab World, Estonia, Liberia and beyond, and the role of faith communities and citizen activism in advancing democracy and constructive social change in the United States and around the world!

Venue & Time: First Congregational United Church of Christ, Washington, D.C., Community Room, February 8<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, March 15<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, 12:00 pm-1:30 pm.

Nurture Co-Leaders: Jim Riker and Sandy Sorenson and all congregation members!

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**Article featuring Xavier Prentice's Christmas Eve testimony**

[Click here](#) to read an article featuring Xavier Prentice, child of First Church, and his testimony from Christmas Eve about what helped his fear when ICE visited his school. We are deeply proud of Xavier's moral courage and we pray for the many children who are being affected by immigration injustice.

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**Sermon Talk-Back with Rev. Amanda: February 15**

Join Rev. Amanda on Sunday, February 15<sup>th</sup> for a sermon talk-back, as we engage Rev. Amanda directly about her recent sermons and theological imagination. This hybrid event will take place in the Community Hall and on Zoom following worship.

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**Ash Wednesday Service: February 18 at 7:00 PM**



Join us in the sanctuary or [click here](#) to join us on Zoom for our Ash Wednesday service on February 18<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM. This service marks the start of our six-week Lenten journey together as we prepare our hearts to receive the mystery of Easter. We invite you to participate in an ancient ritual that reminds us of the frailty of human living and our need for healing—the imposition of the ashes. The

service will include scripture reading, special music, and a reflection from Rev. Sam. 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.

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### **Sign-Up for Coffee Hour in 2026**

Coffee Hour gives each of us an opportunity to provide a warm welcome to visitors and regular attenders alike by setting out drinks and snacks for post-worship fellowship. **For this to happen each Sunday, we need all members to sign up at least twice per calendar year.** Care of Parish is scheduling for 2026. If you've not signed up for at least 2 dates in 2026, you can do so by

- Visiting our [SignUpGenius page](#) to select your preferred date
- Emailing us at [copfirstuccdc@gmail.com](mailto:copfirstuccdc@gmail.com) with your requested date(s)
- Signing up on the paper calendar after church

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

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

Thank you for supporting this vital ministry of hospitality. Together, we can ensure Coffee Hour continues to be a warm and welcoming space for all. Many hands make light work, so sign up today to take part in this vibrant tradition!

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### **Sign-Up to Serve as a Scripture Reader or Liturgist**

[Click here](#) to sign up to serve as a scripture reader or liturgist in worship this winter as we enter into Black History Month and the holy season of Lent. 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 you! Questions? Email Rev. Amanda at [ahendlervoss@gmail.com](mailto:ahendlervoss@gmail.com).



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## **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](mailto:dreece111@verizon.net)), Kristen Wheeler ([dessertlady@mac.com](mailto:dessertlady@mac.com)) or Michael Enseki-Frank ([michaelensekifrank@gmail.com](mailto:michaelensekifrank@gmail.com)) with any questions.

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## **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](mailto:churchoffice@firstuccdc.org)).*

Prayers of blessing and gratitude for Lindsay Swisher as she relocates to Detroit for a new job.

Prayers of support for Bob, the father of Rev. Laura Simmons, who was recently diagnosed with cancer.

Prayers for justice, healing, and peace for the people of Minneapolis and for our friends and former members there: Rev. Susie Hayward, Welling Hall, Rev. David Lindsey, and Susan Peacock.

Prayers of strength for David Hendler, Rev. Amanda's father-in-law, as he recovers from a fall and faces treatment for cancer.

Prayers of wisdom for all of the public servants being sworn in across the nation, that they would lead with compassion.

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, February 8**

9:30 am - Bible Workbench

10:30 am - Worship Service &  
Sunday School

11:45 am - Coffee Hour

12:00 pm - Spring Nurture Series

### **Tuesday, February 10**

10:30 am - Staff Meeting

6:00 pm - Drop-In Center

6:30 pm - Council Meeting

### **Wednesday, February 11**

12:15pm - Breakaway Meditation

### **Thursday, February 12**

7:00 pm - O&M Commission

### **Sunday, February 15**

9:30 am - Bible Workbench

10:30 am - Worship Service &  
Sunday School

11:45 am - Coffee Hour

12:00 pm - Sermon Talk-Back

## Reminders and Quick Links

### **Upcoming Coffee Hour Hosts**

February 8: Ethan Miller, Susan Anderson

February 15: TBD

February 22: Marian Drake & Mark Jensen, Karen & Peter Byrne

[Instructions for Coffee Hour](#)

[2026 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

### **From John Horman: Ava Pakiam in recital at Strathmore Mansion**

Ava Pakiam, 15-year-old granddaughter of John Horman, previous director of music at First Church will present a recital with pianist, Cole Anderson on Friday evening, February 13, 7:30 at the Strathmore Mansion in Rockville, Md. While living in Washington DC, Ava played at First Church a number of times and members of the congregation may remember her a young violin prodigy.

The recital is free and anyone wishing to reserve a seat should contact her grandfather at: [johnhorman@comcast.net](mailto:johnhorman@comcast.net).

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### **Freedom and Resistance: an exhibition inspired by The 1619 Project**

In celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Black History Month, the DC Public Library presents the exhibition *Freedom and Resistance: an exhibition inspired by The 1619 Project*. It will be on display in the Great Hall of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library from Jan. 16 - Mar. 15. The exhibition features three sections, created in collaboration with the editors of The New York Times Magazine and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones and educators from The Pulitzer Center.

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*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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