

GABRIEL'S HORN



First Congregational United Church of Christ

February 2026

Beloved Community,

Last Sunday, the leadership that held us fast for all of 2025 passed the torch to a new slate of leaders. As we look ahead to 2026, which marks the 250th anniversary of our nation's independence, we have selected the theme "Engaged Citizenship: Showing Up in Community" to guide us. How do we tell the stories of our nation's origins and founding? How do we excavate hidden histories and probe the core contradiction of our nation's founding principles of liberty and justice for all with the practice of slavery and doctrine of discovery? What are the ongoing legacies of failing to confront such contradictions?



In 2026, we invite you to explore the history of faith communities' role in nonviolent resistance through a 4-week Sunday school class, beginning this month. We will launch two Lenten learning circles studying antiracism as a spiritual practice. Our Commemorative Artwork Task Force hopes to lead a panel presentation on the "Forever in the Path" stained glass artwork at the DC History conference this spring. In the fall, we will engage deeply in the work of faith and democracy through advocacy, education, worship, and getting out the vote. Throughout it all, there will be opportunities to act alongside trusted partner organizations, through service and activism. As a congregation founded in 1865 by abolitionists in the Lincoln administration, the legacy of our ancestors in faith is one of engaged citizenship, and we take seriously God's call to our generation to continue the struggle for justice, peace, and compassion today.

The people of Minneapolis have modeled for all of us how living out our faith requires showing up in community. On February 8th, we are grateful to welcome Rev. Julio Hernandez, Director of Congregation Action Network, to serve as our guest preacher. We will mark the start of the Lenten season with an Ash Wednesday service on February 18th at 7:00 PM. We also anticipate, with great joy, our second annual Talent Show, scheduled for Saturday, February 28th at 6:00pm. Our worship services will feature the music of two ensembles—Witness & Wonder and Rolling Waters, interspersed with beautiful choral

anthems, as we honor Black History Month. Our youth will continue their classes in Our Whole Lives (faith and sexuality) and Confirmation. From Sunday worship to our youth fundraiser soup luncheon (Feb 1), from adult education to antiracism, from the imposition of the ashes to the talent show, I hope you will show up in ways that refresh your spirit and draw you more deeply into community. Faith is not an individualist enterprise—we are on this journey together, and God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

In Hope,
Rev. Amanda

Council Capsule

Council Capsule: January 2026

Council convened on January 13 for the twelfth meeting of the 2025 term. Key topics included the following:

- Thanks to the council and reflection on the preceding year.
- Discussion of parking validation.
- Planning for the upcoming antiracism trainings.
- Reflection on the budget over the past year and discussion of upcoming budget projections.
- Strategizing for coffee hour sign-ups moving forward.
- Discussion of the investment commission recommendations concerning the bridge funds.
- Planning for the upcoming congregational meeting.

If you have questions, please reach out to Peter Tracey, Moderator (peter.l.tracey@gmail.com) or Michael Enseki-Frank, Assistant Moderator (michaelensekifrank@gmail.com).

Submitted by Michael Enseki-Frank, Clerk

Meet the New Moderator: Peter Tracey

Many things have changed at First Church since I last served as Moderator from 2004 to 2006. Most obviously, we have a new building. It was my privilege to serve as Moderator when the congregation took the historic vote to tear down the well-worn "Middle Church" and construct our current home. But while our physical structure at 10 th and G Streets, NW has changed, the "ties that bind" us together as a congregation have remained strong.



I'm looking forward to working with the Council, Commissions, and our remarkable staff this coming year. Our theme for 2026 is "Engaged Citizenship: Showing Up in Community." At a time when our nation's leadership is poisoned by authoritarianism, racism, and corruption, we will do our part as citizens to promote democracy, anti-racism, and common decency in the operation of our government. We clearly cannot do this alone, but we are fortunate to have strong connections with many partner faith communities and other organizations that are allies in this work.

While we continue the fight for social justice, we should also take the time to support each other on a personal level. Weekly worship, coffee hours, potlucks, and informal get-togethers are an important part of getting to know our fellow members and friends. Please make space on your calendar for the Second Annual Retreat this year. Last year's retreat was a great opportunity to spend time with other members and friends in an unrushed environment, not to mention enjoying the s'mores.

Lastly, I would like 2026 to be a year in which we actively encourage leadership and participation among our younger members. We're fortunate to have Michael Enseki-Frank serving as Assistant Moderator, Abigail Cipparone as Clerk, and other young members participating on various Commissions. Their participation in leadership is vital to First Church as we look toward the future.

While we are living in challenging times, I am optimistic about what we can accomplish together. Please feel free to share your thoughts about any way in which we can continue to make First Church a welcoming place for all.

Peter
Peter L. Tracey, Moderator

Christian Education

First Church Youth Service Trip: Detroit This Summer

This July our First Church Youth will be heading to Detroit for a wonderful week of service, community building and fellowship. We are partnering with [Camp Restore Detroit](#), a ministry dedicated to partnering with the local community to help restore and improve neighborhoods. We will also be exploring the region with trips to see the Detroit Tigers game, the Arab American Museum, and the Art District. Throughout, we will be reflecting upon our call to be community builders through the lens of the Beatitudes, songs from MoTown, and poems from Detroit native, Jamaal May.



On Sunday, February 1st, the Youth are sponsoring a Soup fundraiser for the trip! Please bring your appetite to support this trip, which is truly an amazing formative experience for our youth. If you are unable to make it on Sunday, we encourage you to make a contribution [on-line](#) with "Youth Service Trip" in the memo.

First Church Talent Show: February 28th



**Be Our Guest, Be Our Guest
Put Your Talents to the Test,
Show Some Spine, Be Divine
Sing and Cheer,
Laugh Some Tears
For We know
That you'll glow
At the amazing, wonderful,
First Church Talent Show**

February 28th, 6pm – 8pm
[Talent Show Act and Volunteer Sign Up](#)
(sign up by 2/13)



Adult Education Opportunities this Winter & Spring

Please join us following worship on Sundays for a variety of programming to nurture the soul and deepen relationships:

February

Feb 8: "Faith Communities' Role in Nonviolent Resistance" led by Jim Riker & Sandy Sorensen

Feb 15: Sermon Talk-Back

Feb 22: "Faith Communities' Role in Nonviolent Resistance" led by Jim Riker & Sandy Sorensen

March

March 1: Community Potluck

March 8: A Conversation with Tommy's Pantry, led by Rev. Sam

March 15: "Faith Communities' Role in Nonviolent Resistance" led by Jim Riker & Sandy Sorensen

March 22: "Faith Communities' Role in Nonviolent Resistance" led by Jim Riker & Sandy Sorensen

March 29 (Palm Sunday): Sermon talk-back with Rev. Amanda

April

April 5: Easter pancake breakfast

April 12: extended coffee hour

April 19: Prayer and Spiritual Practices for our Times, led by Rev. Amanda

April 26: Bible study, led by Rev. Amanda

Sermon Talk-Back with Rev. Amanda: February 15

Join Rev. Amanda on Sunday, February 15th 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.

Spring Nurture Series: Faith Communities' Role in Nonviolent Resistance

Please join us for a spring nurture series that will explore the visionary roles that 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 8th and 22nd, March 15th and 22nd, 12:00 pm-1:30 pm.

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

Care of Parish

Coffee Hour

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 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!

Facilities

Parking Validator Problems

We have asked ABM Parking and building management to resolve the problems with the parking exit gate not working properly with church validated parking tickets. We are hopeful that they will find a workable solution soon.

In the meantime, if the exit gate does not go up even with a properly validated parking ticket (*the light turned green, right?*), press the button on the gate panel to reach the ABM Parking call center.

If you are for Sunday morning worship, or are parked in a church signed space on P3, they must let you out without charge. If the attendant refuses to do so, tell them to call their supervisor, Dawit Abeje.

Outreach & Membership

Review Your Information In the Member Directory

Every February we invite members and friends of First Church to check that their contact information is correct in our records and to make any necessary updates. There are two ways to do this:

1. **Review and update your information in the online directory. (Highly suggested!)**
Access your contact information via the Servant Keeper Member Portal [here](#). You may select "Forgot your password" in the event you need to recover that information. If you do not receive a follow-up email to that prompt, please email churchoffice@firstuccdc.org to ensure that your email address is correct in our records.
 - a. Important note: please check that your contact information is correct and matching under both the Family Profile and Individual Profile. For detailed instructions on updating your contact information online please [click here](#).
2. **Email the Church Office with your current information.** If you are unable to access the online directory you may email updated contact information to churchoffice@firstuccdc.org. Please only email updates if your information is out-of-date in the 2024 Membership Directory.

We ask that members and friends review their contact information by Friday, February 20th. Printed directories will be available in March 2026.

Ensuring that your contact information is up-to-date allows our community to grow and connect. Thank you!

Sanctuary

"How Can We Support our Immigrant/Refugee Neighbors?"

On Sunday January 4th the Sanctuary Committee provided a Nurture on current issues affecting immigrants and refugees. Below is a summary of some of what First church is doing to address their needs through volunteering, financial contribution and advocacy work.

1. [Congregation Action Network \(CAN\)](#)
Faith based Immigration Advocacy since 2017. Coalition of faith leaders across the DMV to form a consistent public presence. Trainings for rapid response, constitutional rights, court accompaniment. Organizing rallies and protests for faithful resistance to unjust laws and inhuman practices.
2. [Amica Center for Immigrant Rights](#)
Engages in legal defense and litigation for immigrants facing detention or deportation. A passionate team of attorneys and advocates fighting for the rights, safety and unity of immigrant communities.

3. [Migrant Solidarity Mutual Aid](#) (MSMA)
Informs on "Know your Rights" and emergency planning, driving people to appointments, sorting and distributing supplies, legal and medical support.
4. [Free DC](#)
Defends undocumented neighbors from targeting and deportation. Opposes state violence through strategic organizing and escalation that boldly takes a stance against violence and oppression. Fights to advance racial justice and center the voices of Black and Brown residents of DC.
5. [Food Justice DMV](#) (FJDMV)
Serves immigrants and refugees with dignity. Meeting food and baby supply needs with delivery directly to their home, allowing families to remain safely out of the way of ICE. Providing home deliveries to 1200 families a month, utilizing over 550 volunteers.
6. [Tommy's Pantry](#)
It is First Church's mission to involve our youth to help shape their understanding of service and accompaniment. Our youth work with TP to assist in providing food and health supplies to approximately 300 families 2 x a month, 95% of those families are immigrants and refugees.
7. [Building Bridges-Portrait of Immigrants and Refugees](#)
Photographs and interviews with people who have come to the US as immigrants or refugees. Displayed at First Church Dec-Jan.
8. Unaccompanied Children - pro bono work
Providing pro bono representation to unaccompanied minors, ensuring children receive legal counsel to secure asylum or Special Immigrant Juvenile Status.
9. Power of Attorney (POA)
A POA is a critical document allowing a trusted person to manage finances, property and childcare if the grantor is detained or deported. First Church is working with CAN to set up a system that will assist families to safely acquire this valuable legal document.

Thank you to everyone who is courageously and peacefully protesting the inhumane and immoral tactics of ICE.

Please prayerfully consider how YOU can stand in solidarity with our immigrant neighbors and other vulnerable and marginalized people, as a testament to our commitment to antiracism and "to love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:30-31).

Respectfully submitted by the Sanctuary Committee

First Church Awarded a Global HOPE Refugee Ministries MIRA Partner Supporting Matching Grant

"I am pleased to share with you (First Congregational United Church of Christ) that your application has been reviewed and approved by the Global HOPE Team of the United Church of Christ. The award is in the amount of \$5,000." Andrew Long-Higgins, Global HOPE Team Leader and Megan Bergert, Minister for Refugee and Migration Services, United Church of Christ.

These funds are designated for Food Justice DMV (FJDMV) to purchase shelf stable food, produce, baby formula and diapers for approximately 400 immigrant and refugee families.

From the director of FJDMV, "This is phenomenal and profound news! So many more babies and families will receive sustenance, sanity and safety! I cannot thank you enough for writing this (grant) on our behalf. This kind of help is immeasurable!"

Social Action & Awareness

Lenten "Antiracism as Spiritual Practice" Circles

This year, in lieu of our Lenten Learning Circles, we are grateful to offer a six week "Antiracism as Spiritual Practice" training with facilitators Dr. Vivian Jackson (People's Congregational UCC), Saskia Campbell (Hope UCC) and Rev. Dr. Marty Kuchma (St. Paul's UCC). One circle will meet on Zoom and the other will meet in person. Thank you to all who have signed up as we continue to honor our covenant to live into God's calling to be an antiracist church. This training will continue to build the critical mass of trained leaders in all of our shared ministries and life together as a congregation.

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.

2026 Theme: Engaged Citizenship: Showing Up in Community

As we mark the 250th anniversary of our nation's declaration of independence, we commit to telling the truth about our nation's core contradiction of the principle of "freedom and justice for all" and our history of slavery and racism. What are the enduring legacies of this core contradiction? Our theme for 2026 will be "Engaged Citizenship: Showing Up in Community," and throughout the year we will invite you to engage in

antiracism training, discussions about the role of faith in nonviolent resistance, our Faith & Democracy campaign, and collective action—from postcarding to marching in the streets to prophetic witness alongside valued partner organizations. Please show up in community as we seek to strengthen our practice of faith and democracy.



Worship

February 8: We Welcome Rev. Julio Hernandez as our Guest Preacher

Rev. Julio Hernández serves as the Executive Director of Congregation Action Network (CAN), whose mission is to build collective action among interfaith communities for immigrant justice and dignity. A son of Salvadoran immigrants, his faith and heritage ground his passion for justice and his commitment to ensuring all people are treated with dignity and compassion. He is ordained in the Arabic Baptist Church. His family is a wonderful mix of cultures and faith. If he had endless resources, he would sail around the world in search of a hammock and a coconut to read books—drawn by the adventure of traveling on the power of the wind.



Tell Me Something Good: Grounding Ourselves in Good News this Lent



Our worship theme in Lent this year will ground us in something good. At the heart of Jesus' teachings, we find liberation, love, mercy, and grace—all of which are meant to be very good news for us all. This Lent, let us remember that the good news really is good news. It grows like a mustard seed and smells like perfume poured from an alabaster jar. It tastes like bread passed endlessly through a hungry crowd. It sounds like laughter and feels like mercy. The good news is alive in the world. We hope this series will provide fertile ground, rooting our hearts and

lives in the expansive goodness of God. May the good news inspire us to take action in a world desperate to hear, see, and taste what is good.

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 18th 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.



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.



This Month at First Church: February 2026

Sunday, February 1

9:30 am Bible Workbench
10:30 am Worship Service
& Sunday School
11:45 am Soup Fundraiser

Monday, February 2

7:30 pm Christian Education
Commission

Tuesday, February 3

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

Wednesday, February 4

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

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

12:15 pm Break Away Meditation

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

Tuesday, February 17

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

Wednesday, February 18

12:15 pm Break Away Meditation
7:00 pm Ash Wednesday Service

Sunday, February 22

9:30 am Bible Workbench
10:30 am Worship Service
11:45 am Coffee Hour
12:00 pm Spring Nurture Series

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
Member in Discernment – Lynaya Morris

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