

GABRIEL'S HORN



First Congregational United Church of Christ

April 2026

Beloved Community,

Holy week reminds us of the proximity between death and new life. Despite death's sting, in John's gospel Jesus reminds us that unless a seed falls into the earth and dies, it cannot bear fruit. Walter Brueggeman insists "when the 'old truth' over which the king presides is no longer adequate for the crisis," God brings "a new world into being amidst the rubble of the old." This is the power of resurrection on the loose.



We have witnessed immense death in the last year. The tearing down of USAID and the US Institute of Peace, the razing of the civil service, the disregard for human dignity and violence of ICE, the murder of US citizens in their own streets, the bombing of a girl's school in Iran, the rupture of the global order. Yet as our democracy unravels, we have turned toward each other once more. We have built systems of community defense, because "we keep us safe." New songs of resistance have been shared. We have marched together, engaged in public truth-telling, and cared for the most vulnerable. Our moral imagination has animated the possibility that amidst all the destruction, a new freedom is being born. When we look back, a generation from now, will we point to 2026 as the inflection point when the tide began to turn and we built something new?

I imagine it was terrifying for the disciples to dream of a way forward after the crucifixion. Surely, they were implicated in the sedition of Jesus. Surely, they were under surveillance. Jesus' public execution was prolonged and painful. Would they share his fate? With Jesus no longer present in the flesh to guide them, did they doubt their abilities to continue what he began? Sometimes, we struggle to relinquish the systems that have dominated our lives, even though they are no longer life-giving. It can feel foolish to believe that true freedom is possible; that peace can prevail in our world; that justice can be realized for all people. Yet the season of Eastertide invites us to remember the intimacy between death and new life. The resurrection of Jesus calls us to give ourselves over to the new thing God is doing in our

midst, to dream God's dream, and to build the kin(g)dom of heaven here on earth.

This month we invite you to move through the final days of Jesus' life as he walked through the valley of the shadow of death and to behold the dawn of resurrection on the other side. Join us on Maundy Thursday to break bread and worship as we remember the last supper, Jesus' prayer in the garden, his arrest, suffering, and death. On Easter, we will begin in the shadow of the cross as we hear the haunting strain, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" With joy, we will transform our sanctuary into the bright and hope-filled house of God as we proclaim Jesus' triumph over the grave. May the good news of God's unbreakable love wash over you this month as together we imagine a new birth of freedom.

In Hope,
Rev. Amanda

Council Capsule

Council Capsule March 2026

Council convened on March 10th for the second meeting of the 2026 term. Key topics/votes included the following:

- Participate in upcoming Holy Week events: Palm Sunday (Mar 29), Maundy Thursday meal (Apr 2), and Easter Sunday (Apr 5).
- DC History Conference will include a presentation on our church's Forever in the Path commemorative artwork.
- Preparation for music coverage as Ulung remains out through Easter.
- An update from CE regarding ongoing OWL classes and the youth service trip to Detroit. Youth Sunday is scheduled for May 17th.
- Discussion of successful Nurture Series on social justice, and the benefits of the Anti-Racism training.
- Finance and Facilities to meet and bring a recommendation on ownership of the church's insurance policy.
- Update on staffing of certain commissions and the review of the archives.
- Discussion regarding parking/validator solutions.
- Discussion of Fall Retreat.

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 Abigail Cipparone, Clerk

SAVE THE DATE: All Church Fall Retreat: October 16-18

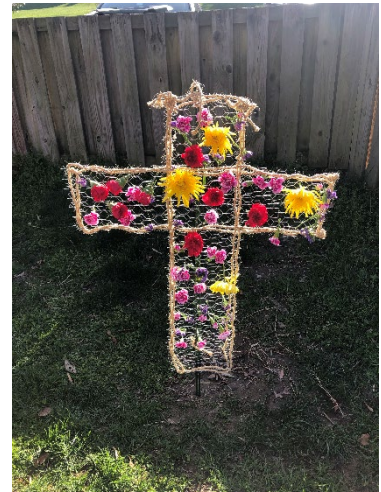
All are invited to join us at West River Retreat Center in West River, MD for an all church retreat, October 16-18, 2026. We will have sign up forms available starting in May, but in the meantime, we encourage you to block out this weekend on your calendar. If you are interested in helping plan any aspect of the retreat, please contact Kim Darling, kdarling@gmail.com, as many hands make for light work!

Christian Education

Easter: Christ is Risen!

We are planning a wonderful Easter on Sunday, April 5th. We will begin by saying loudly and joyfully, "Christ has risen, indeed." We will hear glorious trumpets. During the service, the children will help bring hope out of darkness as the younger children flower the cross and the older children bring lilies to the chancel. The children will also sing "I, the Lord of Sea and Sky."

Following the service, we invite everyone to join us for a wonderful pancake breakfast. Mid-way through the breakfast, the children will be invited to participate in our annual Easter Egg hunt throughout the lower level of the sanctuary. (Please have your child bring their own basket).



We wish you a wonderful Easter season! May it bring new hope and joy to you and your loved ones.

Rev. Sam

We Celebrate Our OWL Graduates

*To honor our 5th and 6th graders who completed the OWL class this winter, First Church shares the litany below to celebrate them.
Way to Go, Archer, Beatriz, Evie, Greta, Grey and Natalie!*

Today, we had our final Our Whole Lives Class. OWL was created by the UCC and Unitarians to provide accurate, age appropriate sexuality education for children, youth and adults.

We had seven classes, led by our energetic teachers: Anna, LaTayna, Kaeley and Rev. Amanda. We learned a lot. It was a safe place to be ourselves and to ask questions.

We learned about our bodies. We wrote letters to ourselves and shared what we love about our bodies. We learned that we come in different shapes and sizes. We affirmed that we are all beautiful because we were made in God's image. We learned that it's ok to have

questions about our bodies. All of this is perfectly normal.

We learned how our bodies change through puberty. Each person develops at their own pace. We can love our body as it changes. We also know we may have some big feelings during puberty. All of this is perfectly normal.

We learned the difference between gender and gender identity. We learned that sometimes the way people feel on the inside doesn't match the assumptions others make about them. We also learned that sometimes society wants us to act a certain way because of our gender, and we can resist that pressure by expressing our true selves. All of this is perfectly normal.

We learned about sexuality and attraction. We learned what it means to identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or heterosexual. We learned that some of us may know now, and some of us may be figuring things out on God's time. We know that God's beloved community includes all of us. All of this is perfectly normal.

We learned where babies come from and that there are many different kinds of families that help raise a child. We talked about sex and birth. This made us a bit curious and a bit uncomfortable. All of this is all perfectly normal.

We learned about what it means to be in a relationship. We learned what it means to respect our partner. We had questions about what makes a healthy relationship. All of this is all perfectly normal.

Finally, we are excited about growing up. We are excited about who we are becoming. We are grateful to God and this Church for supporting us. Amen.

Volunteering at Tommy's Pantry

This Spring, we have two wonderful opportunities to serve with [Tommy's Pantry](#). We will distribute food and wellness supplies to those in need, many of whom are immigrants and refugees from around the world.

Also, we encourage you to bring a friend to serve together. Volunteering is both good for the soul and it's a nice way to introduce a friend to the life and values of First Church. Please sign up at the link below and email Rev. Sam if you have any questions at mcferran.sam@gmail.com.



Tommy's Pantry is located at the Church of the Ascension (633 Sligo Road, Silver Spring, MD, 20910).

* 4/4 6-8 AM Tommy's Pantry Distribution (Grades 5 +)

* 5/2 6-8 AM Tommy's Pantry Distribution (Grades 5 +)

Tommy's Pantry Sign-Up Link - is [Spring 2026 Tommy's Pantry Sign Up](#)

First Church Goes to the Soccer Pitch!!!



**Our Washington Spirit vs Denver Summit FC
July 26th, 7 PM
Audi Field (DC)**

In honor of the World Cup and all of First Church's soccer players and fans, we are excited to cheer on our Washington Spirit on July 26th. It will be an awesome night and will also be Women's Empowerment Night!

Tickets are \$25 per person. If you'd like to go, please email Rev. Sam at mcferran.sam@gmail.com



Adult Education Opportunities this Spring

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

April 5: Easter pancake breakfast

April 12: Extended coffee & community hour

April 19: Prayer and spiritual practices for these times with Rev. Amanda

April 26: Bible study

May 3: Community potluck

May 10: Extended coffee & community hour

May 17: Spring congregational meeting

Prayer & Spiritual Practices for These Times: April 19



Why do we pray? How do we pray? What is the efficacy of prayer? These questions have been asked by the faithful over generations, as we seek to better understand the mystery of prayer. Join Rev. Amanda for a conversation on the purpose of prayer and models of contemplative prayer, including spiritual practices like meditation, scripture reading, and beyond. To withstand the challenges of our times, developing and sustaining spiritual practices

can result in greater peace and resilience. Join us after worship in the Community Hall and on Zoom for this meaningful conversation.

Care of Parish

Care of Parish Updates and Save-the-Dates

April is a busy month for Care of Parish. We hope everyone has one their calendar:

April 2 - Maundy Thursday at 6:30 for a simple meal, communion, prayer and worship service.
April 5 - Easter Service at 10:30 followed by our pancake breakfast and easter egg hunt in the sanctuary for children.

Other dates to remember:

- May 3 potluck is a soup fundraiser for youth service project and the Spring meeting
- June 7 potluck
- July 12 (ice cream social)

Coffee Hour

Coffee hour hosts are needed starting in May. Please sign up. Church members should plan on two sign ups a year to offer hospitality every Sunday. Sign up early to get the most convenient date either by:

- Visiting our [SignUpGenius page](#) to select your preferred date
- Emailing us at copfirstuccdc@gmail.com with your requested date(s)

Easter Pancake Breakfast

Plan to join us for the annual -always wonderful – Easter Pancake Breakfast immediately following the Easter Sunday Service in the Community Hall. Care of Parish is currently organizing this event and is looking for volunteers! We need help with -- 1) specialty pancake makers, 2) set-up on Saturday and 3) clean-up on Sunday. In addition, we could use a couple more electric griddles. If you're interested in helping in any of these ways, please contact Susan Anderson (ssba@gmail.com) or Nan McConnell (nancyfmccconnell@aol.com). Thank you.



Facilities

This Month at Live at 10th & G



Friday Morning Music Club

[Friday Morning Music Club](#) Downtown DC Chamber Series. April 17. Featuring a variety of instrumental and vocal ensembles.

[Washington Bach Consort](#) presents **Toccatas & Suites**. April 10 at 7:00 pm. Critically acclaimed keyboardist Adam Pearl puts Bach's keyboard music in historical perspective.



VOCAL ARTS DC

[Vocal Arts](#) presents **songSLAM DC**. April 11 at 5:00 pm. A unique opportunity for composer/performer teams to premiere new art songs and compete for \$2000 in cash prizes.

Each team presents a new song of 5 minutes or less for voice and one other instrument in any language. The voting audience then, in the poetry slam tradition, votes on their favorites. The DC event will be hosted by Lori Laitman!

Gabrieli Brass Quintet Concert presents **Gabrieli and Beyond**, April 25 at 3:00 pm.



[Capriccio Baroque](#) presents **Italian-Style Concertos**. April 30 at 8:00 pm. Renowned French harpsichordist Benjamin Alard performs four of J.S. Bach's 'Italian Style' Concertos that draw on orchestral works largely by Antonio Vivaldi.

Social Action & Awareness

April Second Sunday Offering: Interfaith Power & Light (DMV)

In April we invite you to give generously to our local environmental interfaith collaborative. [Interfaith Power and Light](#) (DMV) works with hundreds of local congregations of faiths to save energy, go green, and respond to climate change. This year they have mobilized advocacy around data centers, affordable solar, electrification, and shifts to clean energy, as they seek to hold big polluters accountable. They guide communities of faith to imagine a future without combustible fuel and in alignment with energy justice. We hope you will support this important partner organization.



Corner on Our Faith, Our Vote

Washington, DC:

- Primary date: June 16
- WIN Districtwide Candidate Forum: May 17, 3:00-5:00 PM
- Ranked Choice Voting training available through WIN
- Easy Voter Registration at DC Public Libraries (no library card required)
- Questions? Contact Sandy Sorensen

Virginia:

- Primary date: April 21 (registration deadline: April 14)
- Youth Vote: Any Virginian who will be 18 by the November 3rd general election can vote in the primary and the general election this year. They can register now on the [Virginia Elections website](#). Please share this news widely.
- Same day registration is possible to cast a provisional ballot if the registration deadline is missed.
- Questions? Contact Rev. Amanda

Maryland:

- Primary date: June 23
- Youth Vote: Any Marylander who will be 18 by the November 3rd general election can vote in the primary and the general election this year. They can register now on the [Maryland Elections website](#).
- Questions? Contact Jim Riker



Helpful Resources:

- [UCC Webinar on Toxic Polarization & Partisan Divides](#) with Chandra DeNap Whetstine
- [Brennan Center for Justice on the SAVE Act](#)
- [Brennan Center for Justice on how the DOJ is being used to subvert the vote](#) (and what can be done)

On Being a Warrior

A week or so ago, a friend's Substack post included an essay¹ by a former university colleague who took issue with the Secretary's emphasis on "warriors." I provided a response to that post², and this article expands on my post and was prompted by the guided conversation on the war that was held between Reverend Amanda and Andrew Hamilton earlier in March.

Secretary Hegseth views the laws of war as nothing more than a misguided "woke" approach to reality.³ Sadly, Mr. Hegseth has no understanding of the topic. The laws of war can be traced back to Saint Augustine's concept of the Just War thesis in *The City of God*, written about 410 CE. Augustine sought to describe how Christians could take up arms to defend their nation while remaining faithful to Christian teachings.⁴

That doctrine, simply put, was that Christians could in good conscience serve as soldiers in wars that were (1) declared by the ruling powers of the nation, (2) for a just cause, as to defend against attack or right a wrong to a legitimate interest, (3) undertaken as a last resort after other non-violent efforts had failed, (4) undertaken to produce a peace that was better than what would have existed without the war, (5) is fought against opposing armies and not innocent civilians, and (6) had a reasonable chance of success. It was not that a war fought in these circumstances was not wrong (all war is sin), but rather that these parameters excused and justified the participation of Christians.

This approach attempts to balance the need for violence to win wars with the need for humanity towards its victims, including those victimized by participation in the war itself. Many cultures have recognized that war creates a tendency towards inhumanity of almost gravitational effect, and the Just War framework was necessary for participants to try and retain what humanity they could.⁵

Efforts such as those of Francis Lieber and Henry Dunant, repeated international conventions through the 19th and 20th centuries in Geneva and at The Hague, and the tireless efforts of the International Commission of the Red Cross have continued this work, expanding the work of Augustine, adding specific provisions that would address the decision to go to war (*jus ad*

¹ https://open.substack.com/pub/johnb0c/p/soldiers-not-warriors?utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=email

² (https://open.substack.com/pub/johnb0c/p/the-laws-of-war?utm_campaign=post-expanded-share&utm_medium=web).

³ Hegseth: "We will keep pushing, keep advancing, no quarter, no mercy for our enemies." Press Briefing, <https://www.war.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/4434484/secretary-of-war-pete-hegseth-and-chairman-of-the-joint-chiefs-air-force-gen-da/>. Hegseth, Pete, *The War on Warriors: Behind the Betrayal of the Men Who Keep Us Free* (Fox News Books, 2024), <https://www.cnn.com/2026/03/18/us/word-of-week-no-quarter-hegseth-ccc>.

⁴ Augustine, and R. W. Dyson, *The City of God Against the Pagans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁵ M. H. Keen, *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. "Studies in Political History." 1965). Fleck, Dieter. *The Handbook of International Humanitarian Law*. 3rd ed, (Oxford university press, 2013) pp 15-26.

bellum in Latin) and ways to seek to limit the damage of war to the innocent (*jus in bello*). However, the phrased, the focus is on three foundational concepts: Necessity, Discrimination, and Humanity.

Unfortunately, these principles have rarely been adhered to; the rules of civilized behavior are in a constant struggle with a natural tendency toward barbarity. As Reinhold Niebuhr wrote,

*We take, and must continue to take, morally hazardous actions to preserve our civilization. We must exercise our power. But we ought neither to believe that a nation is capable of perfect disinterestedness in its exercise, nor become complacent about a particular degree of interest and passion which corrupt the justice by which the exercise of power is legitimized.*⁶

Late in the 20th century, the Just War framework was recognized as an incomplete solution – it sought to provide guardrails for the decision to go to war and the way the war was fought, but what about after the war? How, despite the death and destruction that is an inevitable consequence of war, could we strive to ensure that the situation after war would be more humane than the situation before it? This led to the development of a third framework: *jus post bellum*, or “justice after war.”⁷

Jus post bellum seeks to promote a restorative rather than purely punitive approach. It rests on the following key principles: (1) ending the war once original, legitimate objectives are met to avoid unnecessary continued conflict; (2) ensuring that peace terms are proportional to the initial aggression and made public; (3) rebuilding of infrastructure and restoring human rights; (4) accountability through prosecution of individuals for war crimes (both sides), while avoiding collective punishment; and (5) Reconciliation and reintegration to foster long-term stability.

More has also been needed to minimize the conditions that lead to conflict, as efforts to merely outlaw war have been ineffective and those to deal with the aftermath of war all too often inadequate. For more than 50 years The United Church of Christ has been in the forefront of seeking to balance attention away from a focus on war to one of promoting and maintaining peace. Dr. Robert V. Moss, second president of the UCC wrote in 1971 “We now need to put as much effort into defining a just peace as we have done in the past in defining a just war.”⁸

In 1985, at the 15th General Synod, the *Pronouncement on affirming the United Church of Christ as a Just Peace Church* was adopted,⁹ and, in the following year the work of the

⁶ Niebuhr, Reinhold, and Andrew J. Bacevich, *The Irony of American History*. (University of Chicago Press ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), p.5.

⁷ Noël Mfuranzima, “Jus post Bellum as a Key to Sustainable Peace after War”, *West Point Lieber Institute Articles of War*, Dec 23, 2024. <https://lieber.westpoint.edu/jus-post-bellum-key-sustainable-peace-after-war/>

⁸ *United Church Herald* supplement, 1971

⁹ <https://new.uccfiles.com/pdf/just-peace-church-pronouncement-GS-15.pdf>

Peace Theology Development Team was published.¹⁰ The insights and guidance found in those documents is too long to summarize here, but I commend them to you. Throughout my career training and teaching members of the military, foreign affairs, and development workers of the United States and other nations, I have found the guidance set forth to be priceless.

Finally, I cannot allow the Secretary of Defense's effort to adulterate and pollute the term "warrior ethos" with his barbaric pronouncements to go unanswered. I have known many warriors, some who worked in the military, but more who worked in the cause of peace as diplomats, development and aid workers, medical staff, and first responders. In *On The Warrior's Path: Philosophy, Fighting, and Martial Arts Mythology*, Daniele Bolelli writes;

*"It takes individuals with indomitable spirits to evade the negative conditioning caging us...Only warriors with sacred fire in their eyes possess the will to get back on their feet after being knocked down time and time again...it is a warrior's duty to take care of everything and everybody...The battle is against mental limits, dullness, short-sightedness. It is against resignation, greed sadness. Against all those powers that separate human beings from happiness. The warrior doesn't walk into battle only for himself. The warrior fights for everything and everyone."*¹¹

Ensuring that our public servants understand and are encouraged to act in ways that are consistent with both Just War and Just Peace precepts helps them defend themselves and mitigate the harmful effects of their exposure to the violence inherent in their tasks. Bolelli does not limit the term to members of the military but expands it to include all of us who work and fight for others and calls for us as warriors to strive to be a better form of ourselves. This is a time for all to become warriors.

Efforts to avoid war and mitigate its destructive results is, unfortunately, can seem unending if not hopeless. Our efforts will not be in vain so long as we undertake the struggle as warriors.

*"Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore, we must be saved by hope. Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore, we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore, we must be saved by love. No virtuous act is quite as virtuous from the standpoint of our friend or foe as it is from our standpoint. Therefore, we must be saved by the final form of love which is forgiveness."*¹²

In Peace,
Jaimie Orr

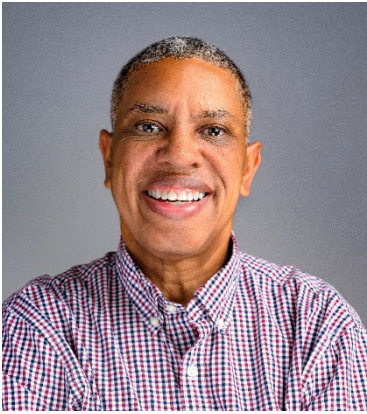
¹⁰ Thistlewate, Susan, ed. *A Just Peace Church* (Cleveland, United Church Press, 1986).

¹¹ Bolelli, Daniele., *On the Warrior's Path: Fighting, Philosophy, and Martial Arts Mythology*. (Berkeley, Calif.: Blue Snake Books, 2010).

¹² Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History*, p. 63.

Anti-Racism

Reflecting on the Antiracism as My Spiritual Practice Circles by Rev. Dr. LaTayna Purnell



I appreciated participating in the Anti-Racism Lenten Circles. They are a meaningful and accessible entry point into this work, especially for those who are newer to engaging issues of race, justice, and equity. Creating space during Lent for reflection, confession, and transformation is both timely and faithful.

And yet, if we are honest, this moment requires more than entry points.

We are living in a time that demands depth, courage, and sustained commitment. Anti-racism cannot remain at the level of introduction or conversation alone. If this work is to be faithful, it must also be formational, disruptive, and transformative—shaping not only what we say, but how we live, lead, and show up in the world.

At present, the structure of the circles risks stopping at awareness when what is needed is movement—movement toward truth-telling, accountability, and embodied justice.

With that in mind, I offer the following not simply as suggestions, but as an invitation to deepen our collective faithfulness:

Affinity-Based Spaces as a Necessary Practice

If we are serious about this work, we must create spaces where truth can be told fully. Affinity groups—such as a BIPOC group and a white participants group—are not divisive; they are honest. They recognize that while we are all shaped by racialized systems, we are not shaped by them in the same way.

- BIPOC participants deserve space to speak from lived experience without the burden of translation, explanation, or self-editing.
- White participants need space to wrestle deeply with privilege, bias, and accountability—without relying on BIPOC participants to carry that labor.

This is not about separation. It is about creating the conditions for transformation.

From Conversation to Formation: A Shared Learning Journey

Conversation alone will not sustain this work. We need shared formation.

Engaging or re-engaging texts such as *Stamped from the Beginning* and *How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi offers both historical truth and practical frameworks. When engaged across the whole congregation—with adaptations for children, youth, and adults—we begin to build a shared language and a shared accountability. This is how communities shift: not through isolated conversations, but through collective formation.

Accountability Through Action

Faith without works is empty. If this is Lenten work, then it must lead somewhere.

I would strongly encourage integrating:

- **Clear action commitments** (personal and communal)
- **Engagement with local justice efforts**
- **Public witness as a congregation**

Without action, this risks becoming performative rather than transformative.

Differentiated Pathways for Growth

We must tell the truth that people are in different places—and design accordingly.

A single-entry model cannot hold the weight of this work. Consider:

- A **Foundations track** for those just beginning
- A **Deepening track** for those ready for harder, more complex engagement
- A **Leadership track** to equip facilitators and organizers

If we do not cultivate leaders, this work will not last.

Rooting This Work in Worship and Spiritual Practice

If this is truly Lenten, then it must be spiritual work—not just intellectual work.

This means integrating themes of confession, lament, repair, and transformation into worship.

It means naming harm, not abstractly, but concretely. It means allowing this work to shape our prayer life, our preaching, and our communal rituals.

Anti-racism is not an “add-on.” It is discipleship. It is who we are called to be.

Beyond Lent: A Commitment, Not a Season

Finally, this cannot end with Lent.

If we are serious, then we must build structures that carry this work forward—ongoing groups, accountability practices, and a long-term vision for what it means to be a congregation committed to racial justice.

As the Antiracism Committee considers these possibilities, please reach out to any one of us to discuss these ideas further. The Committee includes:

Diane Brenneman

Kim Darling

Rev. Amanda Hendler-Voss

Lynaya Morris

Rev. Dr. LaTayna Purnell

Janneke Ratcliffe

Rev. Jason Carson Wilson

Worship

Maundy Thursday Worship: April 2 at 6:30

Join us for a powerful experience of the Holy Week journey on Maundy Thursday. We will begin in the Community Hall with a simple middle eastern meal and communion feast as we remember the last supper; we will move to the chapel to pray with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, then we will move to the sanctuary as we remember Jesus' trial and crucifixion. Please join us for one of the most deeply felt services of the year, brimming with music, scripture, and prayer. This hybrid service will take place in person and also be accessible on Zoom, beginning at 6:50 (after the meal), by [clicking here](#).



Easter Sunday Worship: April 5



Join us in the sanctuary at 10:30 on Easter Sunday or [click here](#) to join us by Zoom as we emerge from the shadow of the cross to the dawn of Jesus' victory over the grave! The service will begin with "Were You There" sung by Marian Drake before we transform the sanctuary from its graveclothes into the bright and hope-filled house of God's love, with the help of our children who will flower the cross. We are grateful to welcome back the Gabrieli Brass Quintet. Ethan Miller will lead us in a unison prayer of illumination. Our children will sing "Here I Am, Lord," led by Rev. Sam. The First Church Choir will sing the anthems, "Christ Has Broken Down the Wall," by Mark Miller and "The Majesty and Glory of Your Name" by Tom Fettke under the direction of Dennis Turner. CJ Thayer will serve as our scripture reader with a focus text from Matthew 28:1-10 (the resurrection of Jesus). Rev. Amanda will preach a sermon entitled, "Living

Witnesses." We will celebrate the ancient feast of communion. For those joining us by Zoom, please prepare your table with the elements of bread and cup, which we will bless and break together. Join us for a service celebrating the joy of resurrection power!

Our children will begin worship in the sanctuary; following their special music, they will move to the Living Room for a special time with Rev. Sam. Following the sermon, they will return to the sanctuary to join us in communion. We invite youth to remain in the service. Nursery care will be provided in the Christian Education suite throughout all of worship.

Following worship, join us in the Community Hall for the Easter Pancake Breakfast hosted by our Care of Parish Commission. Gluten-free (and gluten-full!) and vegan pancakes will be available, and there will be more than enough for everyone. An egg hunt for our children in the sanctuary will follow.

Spoken Word Minister Leah Burgess: April 26



Join us in worship on Sunday, April 26th as we welcome Spoken Word Minister Leah Burgess into our pulpit to deliver the message. B.Leah (Leah Burgess) is a mother, wife, daughter, contemplative and healing-centered spoken word artist, author, a dual degree (M.Div./M.S.W.) alumna of Howard University ('24) and current PhD student at Christian Theological Seminary (African American Preaching & Sacred Rhetoric). She was licensed to preach as a minister at Union Baptist Church (2006, Hartford, CT). B.Leah currently serves as an ordained elder at Community of Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Online Engagement Coordinator at Church at The Well (DC), Co-Director of the Black

Contemplative Society, and Director of Digital Strategy & Social Media and Admissions Coordinator at Howard University School of Divinity.

This Month at First Church: April 2026

Thursday, April 2

6:30 pm Maundy Thursday Worship Service

Sunday, April 5: Easter Sunday

9:30 am Bible Workbench
10:30 am Worship Service & Sunday School
11:45 am Pancake Breakfast & Easter Egg Hunt

Monday, April 6

7:00 pm Finance Commission

Tuesday, April 7

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

Wednesday, April 8

12:15 pm Break Away Meditation
7:00 pm O&M Commission

Sunday, April 12

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

Tuesday, April 14

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

Wednesday, April 15

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

Sunday, April 19

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

Monday, April 20

7:30 pm CE Commission

Tuesday, April 21

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

Wednesday, April 22

12:15 pm Break Away Meditation
7:00 pm Facilities Commission
7:00 pm Antiracism Committee

Sunday, April 26

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

Tuesday, April 28

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

Wednesday, April 29

12:15 pm Break Away Meditation

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
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Associate Minister – Rev. Sam McFerran
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