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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

First Church Weekly Newsletter July 17, 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



"Girl with a D Earring" by Sydney G. James

Join us at 10:30 in the sanctuary or join us [by Zoom](#) this Sunday for worship. Joseph Darling-LaGamma will call us to worship with a personal reflection on our summer theme, "Unsung Heroes." Rev. Sam will lead a time with our children. Marian Drake will offer special music, singing "Make Me a Channel of your Peace" by Mark Hayes. Courtney McCaffrey and Dwan Reece will serve as our scripture readers with focus texts from Amos 7:7-15 (a plumb line) and Luke 9:1-6 (sending the twelve). Rev. Sam will preach the sermon. Rev. Karen

Byrne will lead our time of prayer. We will use the African American Heritage Hymnal throughout the service. Join us!

Our children will begin worship 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 for infants and toddlers.

Following worship, please join us in the lobby for coffee and community.

The worship folder for this week is available [here](#).

Announcements

First Church Goes to the Soccer Pitch!

Our Washington Spirit vs Denver Summit FC

July 26 at 7pm

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 26. 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

Crafting a Labyrinth for First Church

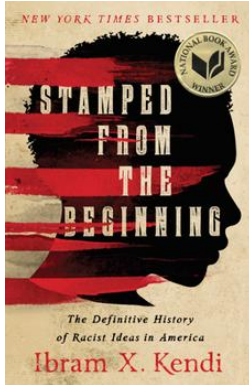
Calling all crafters! First Church is looking for volunteers willing to help design and implement a portable cloth labyrinth for use as a physical meditation practice following worship. Labyrinths are a great way to get folks "out of their heads" and



moving into a space of quiet contemplation that engages mind, spirit, and body. However, full-scale structural labyrinths are expensive and bulky (and pre-made fabric labyrinths can also cost a pretty penny!). We're looking for a team of crafty people willing to dedicate their time and talent to helping create First Church's own, portable cloth labyrinth. In particular, we're looking for volunteers who are willing to assist with procuring materials, designing, or sewing and

painting. With enough volunteers, this should only take a few hours: many hands make light work! If interested in learning more, please reach out to Reshmina William at reshmina.william@gmail.com.

All-Church Summer Read: Stamped from the Beginning



Join us throughout summer for our All-Church Summer Read. We have selected Dr. Ibram X. Kendi's book *Stamped From the Beginning*. This book is available in a variety of versions designed for most levels of readers, making it a great option for a read aloud or read along for your entire family. It's available in print, electronic, and audible versions. The public libraries in our area carry copies. We will host a discussion of the book and its relevance to our community at the end of August. Below are links to the different versions

to help you acquire your own copy.

- [Original Version](#)
- [Graphic Novel](#)
- [Young Adult Version](#)
- [Kid's Version](#)

Each week we will provide a prompt for those reading to stay engaged. Here's your weekly prompt: **One of Dr. Kendi's main points in this book is that "the need of powerful people to defend racist policies that benefited them led them to produce racist ideas." As you read this book, make note of historical examples that support his premise.**

Immigration Updates from the Sanctuary Committee

Dear Beloved, These past weeks have brought the sad news of yet two more lives taken by ICE. Lorenzo Salgado Araujo in Texas and Johan Sebastián in Maine. The UCC Minister for Refugee and Immigration services responded this way. **We must not accept killings perpetrated by ICE as a new normal or as the cost of migration.** These killings are an inextricable part of the mass detention and mass deportation policy. They are part of the same system that has cost [54 individuals in ICE custody their lives](#) since Trump's inauguration. They are the reality of Congress voting to give ICE and CBP over \$200 billion in the last year alone. As we bear witness to the lives and deaths of Lorenzo Salgado Araujo and Johan Sebastián, may we also carry forward a dedication

to resisting deadly empire and the violence that makes it possible. Here are some local actions:

- **Free DC** is working to persuade state governments not to send NATIONAL GUARD troops to DC.
- **CAN** is advocating in congress against terminating TPS for Haitians and Syrians and other countries to come.
- **Food Justice DMV** is delivering food and raising funds to cover rent for our neighbors too afraid to leave their homes to go to work. ICE roundups are once again visibly happening in the DMV.
- **AMICA** continues to offer legal representation in support of asylum seekers in the DMV. They successfully won the case against warrantless searches by ICE in DC, and are now mounting the same case in Maryland.

If these local events involving TPS, the National Guard and ICE agents move you to action, the sanctuary committee can help you make a meaningful connection. *Sanctuary Members: Susan Saudek, Barbara Gerlach, Michael Enseki-Frank, Cynthia Hobbs, Jamey Moore, Jody Kenney and Peter Tracey*

Lean into Summer Worship

This summer, when you hear the singing bowl invite us into holy time, the musical prelude marks the shift between the noise of the world and the sanctuary of God's house. We invite you to consider the prelude as a spiritual practice; a cue to breathe deeply and quiet the heart, to return to the life-giving love of God. Throughout the summer, you will notice our sanctuary is set for a more intimate gathering. Please join us in the chairs on the floor of the sanctuary as we sit in the round, so we can see one another and worship side-by-side. Special music will minister to us weekly, and we will enjoy a deep bench of preachers from the pews: Abigail Cipparone, Trevor Bakker, Diana Gomez de Molina, and Sandy Sorensen, along with Rev. Amanda and Rev. Sam. On July 12th, our youth will deliver the message following their service learning trip to Detroit. Lean in this summer as together we invite the gospel message of liberation and love to wash over us here in the nation's capital.



Connect with Rev. Amanda this Summer

Connect with Rev. Amanda this summer by signing up for one of her Friday coffee and conversation slots. This will be a time to enjoy conversation, deepen connection, or to receive pastoral care. You can pick a date and time and please note where you wish to meet (her office or a nearby coffee shop). Please note there are some Fridays when she is away on vacation. Sign up [here](#).

July's Second Sunday Special Offering: Black Swan Academy

In July, we will take up a second Sunday special offering for [Black Swan Academy](#), a local organization that envisions a world where Black youth powered by their lived experiences are equipped with the tools and opportunities to be active decision makers and leaders who drive social change for the liberation of all people through civic leadership and engagement. BSA launches youth agenda areas such as affordable housing, mental health, environmental justice and more. Learn more [here](#) or speak to Casey Capsambelis, whose former students are active leaders in the organization. Please give generously to support Black Swan Academy.



Sign Up as Scripture Reader or Liturgist



[Click here](#) to sign up to serve as a scripture reader or liturgist in worship this summer. 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.

Coffee Hour Hosts Needed

Each church member is asked to sign up two times a year to host coffee hour and we need 2-3 hosts each Sunday. Hosting includes providing a snack, making coffee and tea, and cleaning up. If you need more information or have

questions, please contact Nick McConnell (nicholasmcconnell@msn.com) or go to our [SignUpGenius page](#) to select your preferred date.

Thank you,
Care of Parish

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) 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 joy for the Rev. Dr. LaTayna Purnell, officially called to serve as the new Associate Minister of Care and Community at Christ Congregational Church UCC in Silver Spring, MD.

Prayers of mercy for the people of Venezuela following the devastating earthquakes.

Prayers of peace and comfort for Polly Gordon as she undergoes treatment for lung cancer.

Prayers of joy for the birth of Josephine Cheng Meekins to Alyx and Matthew. Welcome to the world, beloved child of God!

Prayers of comfort for Ann, Paul and Ellen Bushmiller, Susan Anderson, and their families following the death of their beloved father and longtime First Church member, Hugh Bushmiller, at age 98.

Prayers of comfort for the family of Rev. Laura Simmons, whose father passed away after battling cancer.

Prayers for peace in Iran and for all those impacted by the war.

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, July 19

9:30 am - Bible Workbench

10:30 am - Worship Service &
Sunday School

11:45 am - Coffee Hour

Monday, July 20

7:30 pm - CE Commission

Tuesday, July 21

6:00 pm - Drop-In Center

Wednesday, July 22

12:15 pm - Break Away Meditation

Sunday, July 26

9:30 am - Bible Workbench

10:30 am - Worship Service

11:45 am - Coffee Hour

Reminders and Quick Links

Upcoming Coffee Hour Hosts

July 19: Kristen & Whit Wheeler

July 26: Gail Sonnemann

August 2: Michael Enseki-Frank, Chris 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](#)

[How to Access and Update Online Member Directory](#)

[First Church Usher Schedule](#)

Community Bulletin Board



We are calling on Congress to pass the Dignity for Detained Immigrants Act (H.R. 6397 / S. 3702). This legislation would:

- End the detention of families and children
- Phase out private detention centers and jails
- Require DHS to meet the American Bar Association's civil immigration detention standards
- Mandate unannounced inspections by the DHS Inspector General, with penalties for violations
- Allow members of Congress to conduct unannounced visits to detention facilities

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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