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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

First Church Weekly Newsletter August 14, 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 join us [by Zoom](#) this Sunday for worship. Rev. Linda Olson Peebles will call us to worship with a personal reflection on our summer theme, "Unsung Heroes." Nora Marsh will share a moment for poetry. The Olson family will sing Bob Dylan's "I Shall Be Released" as special music. Thaddaeus Elliott and Jaimie Orr will serve as our scripture readers with focus texts from Isaiah 35 (the desert shall blossom) and Luke 5:17-26 (tearing open the roof to heal one who was paralyzed). Rev. Amanda will preach the sermon. We will also share in prayers of the people. Our hymns will all come

from the African American Heritage Hymnal, so pick one up on your way into the sanctuary. Join us!

Rev. Sam is away on vacation this week, and there will be no Sunday school due to the summer break.

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

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

Announcements

Love Offering for Drop-In Center Coordinator Jarred Bowman



As we prepare to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Drop-In Center on August 25th (6:00-8:00pm), we are taking up a love offering for our dedicated Drop-In Center Coordinator, [Jarred Bowman](#), in gratitude for his leadership. A fifth generation Washingtonian, Jarred is deeply passionate about DC's youth and has committed his life and vocation to transformational change. He is a Racial Equity Policy Analyst during the day and had faithfully guided our Drop-In Center for the last five years in collaboration with Sasha Bruce Youthwork. To give to this love offering, please connect with Rev. Amanda, who can receive gifts of cash or through Venmo.

Blessing of the Backpacks: August 30

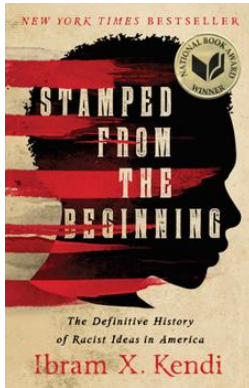
We invite all children and youth for a special Children's Moment on August 30 for the Blessing of the Backpacks. We will bless all our students, faculty and staff for a safe and wonderful year of learning, growth, and joy!

The Blessing of the Backpacks is both an opportunity for the church to support our students, but also to share how God's spirit accompanies them each and every day. Whether your student is in daycare, elementary school, or high school, we hope they can join us. We would love for them to bring their backpack, as well as wear their school colors! We especially pray for our children and youth who are starting at a new school.



Please reach out to Rev. Sam if you would like to help with this special Children's Moment.

Book Discussion on All-Church Summer Read: August 30



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 on August 30. 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: **Kendi argues that both antiracist thought and racist thought can be advanced in a society simultaneously. How have you seen this happen in recent years?**

Back to School Toiletry Drive

This summer, we will be supporting A Wider Circle's 8th Ward Hub by participating in a toiletry drive. The 8th Ward Hub is a vibrant community center dedicated to serving the residents of the Washington Highlands, a beautiful but very isolated part of the city. Washington Highlands includes many community members who face food and housing insecurity. The items for the toiletry drive are listed below. You can either bring them to church or have them mailed to the A Wider Circle with 8th Ward Hub in the note - 9159 Brookville Rd, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Please email Rev. Sam if you have any questions at mcferran.sam@gmail.com.

1. Socks
2. Underwear – Children to Young Adult Sizes
3. Undershirts – Children to Young Adult Sizes
4. Dove Soap

5. Dove Body Wash
 6. Tide Pods
 7. Men's Deodorant
 8. Women's Deodorant
 9. Lotion
 10. Sanitary Napkins (multiple sizes including plus)
 11. Lip Balm
-

Seeking a Sunday Worship A/V Tech

First Church is hiring an A/V Tech to work during weekly Sunday morning worship services. While individuals who are members at First Church are not allowed to apply per our personnel policy, we appreciate any help sharing the announcement below with your networks.

First Church A/V Tech

Progressive, downtown DC church seeks an A/V engineer to run audio and video for weekly Sunday morning programming. The A/V Tech is expected to be onsite from 9:00am – 1:30pm, which includes setup, worship, educational programming, and teardown. Worship tech includes:

- Audio microphones for speakers and musicians
- Video switching between two hi-def cameras and connecting feed to Zoom
- Monitoring connection to Zoom
- Troubleshooting audio during the service

A one-hour adult education program follows at noon two or three Sundays per month with a simple setup of one camera on tripod, a hand-held microphone, and a laptop connected to Zoom. Gig rate is \$660 per month and includes four Sundays off in a 12-month period. Additional opportunities for evening services and church programming paid separately. Located at 10th & G Streets NW, convenient to Metro Center and Gallery Place. Free parking available onsite on Sunday mornings. Email your expression of interest and a resume to Byron Adams at badams@firstuccdc.org.

Crafting a Labyrinth for First Church

Calling all crafters! First Church is looking for volunteers willing to help design

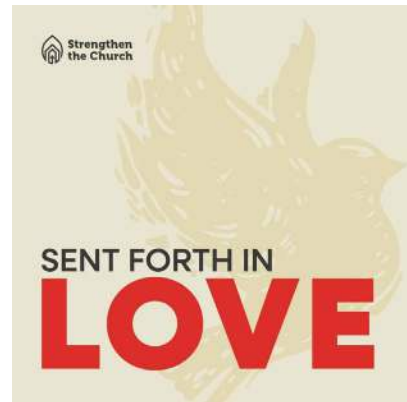
and implement a portable cloth labyrinth for use as a physical meditation practice following worship. Labyrinths are a great way to get folks "out of their heads" and moving into a space of quiet contemplation that engages mind, spirit, and body.



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.

August Second Sunday Offering: Strengthen the Church

In August, our second Sunday offering will go to one of the special offerings of the United Church of Christ, [Strengthen the Church](#). The Strengthen the Church offering supports congregations and initiatives that help us live into the United Church of Christ "big tent" mission. Your support of this offering will help the UCC fulfill its commitment to creating a just world for all by investing in new ministries and practices that meet the emerging



needs of local communities. As God calls our congregations to be the church in new ways, your generosity will plant new churches, awaken new ideas in existing churches and develop the spiritual life in our youth and young adults. Please give generously! To learn more, watch the [Strengthen the Church](#) video. While we will take up the offering on August 9th, please know you can give to this special offering throughout the month either by writing "Second Sunday Offering" in the memo portion of your check or by indicating your online donation is for the second Sunday offering. Thank you!

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 established a Signal group as a way for members to share information about upcoming events and programming. The group is 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. Please contact Dwan Reece (dreece111@verizon.net) or Michael Ensekif-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 light and comfort for our siblings at Inner Light Ministries following the death of their founding pastor, Bishop Kwabena "Rainey" Cheeks. Their first service was held in 1993 in our building.

Prayers of healing for Abby Goodman-Johnson as she recovers from a procedure.

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

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

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 for peace and rebuilding in Gaza.

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, August 16

9:30 am - Bible Workbench

10:30 am - Worship Service

11:45 am - Coffee Hour

Wednesday, August 19

12:15 pm - Break Away Meditation

7:00 pm - Facilities Commission

7:00 pm - SAAC Commission

Tuesday, August 18

10:30am - Staff Meeting

6:00 pm - Drop-In Center

Sunday, August 23

9:30 am - Bible Workbench

10:30 am - Worship Service

11:45 am - Coffee Hour

Reminders and Quick Links

Upcoming Coffee Hour Hosts

August 16: Trevor Bakker, Kevin Anderson

August 23: Nick & Nan McConnell

August 30: Anthony Leonard, Robert Mann-Thompson, Kiss Family

[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

Join Us: An Evening with Rev. Dr. Jason Carson Wilson

Thursday, August 27 at 7:30 p.m.

Westmoreland Congregational United Church of Christ, [1 Westmoreland Circle, Bethesda, MD](#)

Co-sponsored by the Board of Social Justice and Action, this book talk and reception celebrates the release of *Makeshift Messiahs: Why the American Right Keeps Creating Political Saviors* — a timely look at how the American right keeps casting strongmen as saviors, and what it will take to resist that pull.

The evening will also serve as a recruiting event for the D.C. chapter of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (forusa.org), inviting attendees to get involved in FOR's ongoing work for justice and nonviolent social change.

Free and open to the public. Reception to follow.

THE MACHINERY IS OPERATIONAL.
COME FIND OUT HOW IT WORKS.

JOIN ME
THURSDAY, AUGUST 27
AT 7:30 P.M.

AT
WESTMORELAND CONGREGATIONAL UCC
1 Westmoreland Circle
Bethesda, MD 20816

★ **CO-SPONSORED BY**
Board of Social Justice and Action
Westmoreland Congregational
United Church of Christ

FOR A TALK + Q&A
ON
MAKESHIFT MESSIAHS
Why the American Right Keeps
Creating Political Saviors
HOW REAGAN, BUSH, AND CHARLIE KIRK
BUILT A MACHINE THAT TURNS
POLITICIANS INTO GODS.

**NO POLITICIAN
DESERVES WORSHIP.
COME THROUGH.**

MAKESHIFT MESSIAHS
Why the American Right Keeps
Creating Political Saviors
REV. JASON CARSON WILSON

LEARN, QUESTION, RESIST.
BUILD COMMUNITY. TAKE ACTION.
<https://books2read.com/u/3JzaKB>

FELLOWSHIP OF RECONCILIATION
D.C. CHAPTER

BE PART OF THE MOVEMENT FOR
PEACE, JUSTICE, AND RECONCILIATION.
Join the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) D.C. Chapter
and stand with others working for nonviolence,
dismantling racism, economic justice, and a more
compassionate world.

JOIN US. BE THE PEACE. LEARN MORE & GET INVOLVED: WWW.FORUSA.ORG/DC

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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