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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

First Church Weekly Newsletter October 2, 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 [on Zoom](#) as we celebrate World Communion and continue our fall theme, "The Realm of God." Miyako Dodge will lead us in a prayer of confession and provide words of assurance. Throughout the service, we will offer an extended communion liturgy as we bring bread representing people around the world to the worship table. The Rev. Barbara Gerlach will lift up the people of Colombia, Nana Ofori-Atta will lift up the people of Ghana, Casey Capsambelis will lift up the people of Palestine, Diane Brenneman will lift up the people of Nepal, and Abby Goodman-Johnson will lift up the people of Haiti. As each offering of bread is placed on the worship table, the congregation will join in the refrain "One Bread, One Body." Nora Marsh and the Rev. Jason Carson Wilson will serve as our scripture readers with focus texts from Matthew 21:42-46 (the stone that the builders rejected became the cornerstone) and Philippians 3:4-14 (press on toward the goal). For those joining us from home, please take the time to prepare your table with the sacred elements of bread and cup, which we will bless and break together. Join us!

Our children will begin the morning in Sunday School with Rev. Sam in the Christian Education wing. They will join us for the communion feast. The nursery will be open for infants and toddlers throughout the morning.

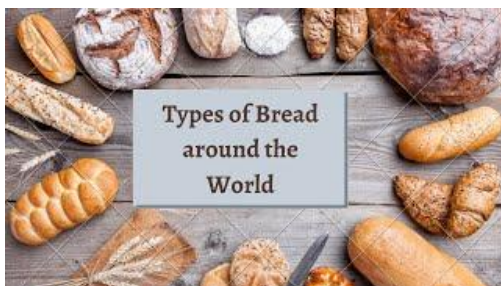
Following worship, join us for a feast of global breads as we partake in the breads from around the world along with cheese, fruits, butter, oil, and hummus

during our extended coffee hour. Please consider bringing bread from an area of the world that is meaningful to you, or any of the accompaniments.

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

Announcements

This Sunday: Feast of Global Breads



On World Communion Sunday, our communion feast will feature breads representing five nations around the world as we remember and lift up their people. Join us following worship for a feast of global breads as we enjoy communion breads with cheese, fruits, butter, oil, and

hummus. If there is a place around the world that is meaningful to you, please bring bread to share to represent that region. Please note our feast of global breads will take the place of an October potluck, but we encourage you to bring bread to share if you would like.

Help Support the Kiss Family

Beloved Community, Eric Kiss is facing a difficult health crisis, and Anna has created a [CaringBridge](#) site to keep everyone updated and to organize the ways we can sign up to support their family. You can sign up for the Meal Train [here](#). Let us surround Eric, Anna, Riley, and Archer with our prayers as we also pitch in to care for them however we can in the weeks and months ahead. They are part of our First Church family, and they do not walk this path alone. We pray that the love of God will attend them, mind, body, and spirit. We truly appreciate your prayers and your care for them in this time.



Election Protection & the Election Aftermath: October 11

Join Thaddaeus Elliott and Sandy Sorensen for the final discussion in our Faith & Democracy series as we focus on election protection in an election strained



by measures to restrict and discourage voting. How can we support fair, free, and peaceful elections as we work to empower voter participation? How do we report problems at a polling place? What advice can we offer if anyone is turned away from the polls? We will also discuss what to expect in the weeks and months following the election, as we explore how First Church can be a supportive, engaged community grounded in our shared values. This will be a hybrid program in the Community Hall and on Zoom. Join us!

Last Week to Register for the All-Church Retreat!

Join us for fun, community, and spiritual renewal!

[West River Retreat Center](#), West River, MD

Please plan to join us for our Fall Congregational Retreat to enjoy the outdoors, strengthen relationships, and dig into what it means to build our church on the solid rock of covenant (Matthew 7:24-27). We will have opportunities to enjoy a ropes course, hiking trails, games, music, canoeing, and a campfire. The retreat will include an outdoor worship service on Sunday morning. We welcome newcomers, families with children of all ages, longtime members, and everyone in between! [Registration is open now through October 8th.](#)



Choose Joy in Community this Election Season:

The Longest Table Postponed Due to Weather Forecast



The Longest Table has been postponed due to the weather forecast. Stay tuned for an updated schedule. Organized by the DC Poor People's Campaign, The Longest Table is a communal meal shared with neighbors from across the city to foster new relationships, introduce us to neighbors and friends, hear stories and experience diverse perspectives. The Longest Table is a citywide

invitation to experience what DC looks like when everyone is welcomed, fed, and seen. This is not a political rally. It is a public act of joy, hospitality, and

human dignity. Sponsors help create a space where neighbors who rarely meet across race, class, faith, and zip code, share a meal and discover each other's humanity.

Request for Feedback for Rev. Amanda's Evaluation

The First Church Senior Ministerial Relations Team ("SMRT") is preparing to conduct Rev. Amanda's evaluation for the year 2025-26 and would like to gather input from the congregation. The SMRT is composed of Peter Tracey, Michael Enseki-Frank, Dwan Reece, and Andrew Hamilton.

Please use [this questionnaire](#) to submit feedback. If you choose to answer any of the questions, please try to be as specific as possible. If you would prefer to discuss your responses over the phone or in person, please feel free to contact any member of the SMRT.

All responses are due by October 25, 2026. Thank you for participation in this project.

Director of Music Ministry Position Announcement

Dear First Church,

The Director of Music Ministry Search Committee is pleased to announce that the position announcement for a new Director of Music at First Congregational Church is now live. It has been posted on the First Church website [here](#) and all First Church social media channels. Our consultant, Dr. Tony McNeill, has also posted it on his website, <https://www.drtonymcneill.com/jobs>.

We invite all members and friends to share the announcement as widely as possible. The Committee will begin reviewing applications on October 12th. Please contact the committee co-chairs with any questions.

Andrew Hamilton, Co-Chair, Director of Music Ministry Search Committee
Dwan Reece, Co-Chair, Director of Music Ministry Search Committee

Write Postcards for the Midterm Get-Out-the-Vote Effort

The Justice and Witness Action Network-VA of the Central Atlantic Conference

is participating with the [Center for Common Ground](#) in a nonpartisan postcard-writing campaign to increase Black voter turnout in Virginia's midterm elections. You do not need to be a resident of Virginia to help us get out the vote! Get your postcards, stamps, voter addresses and scripts in the narthex on Sunday mornings; our goal is to send 1,000 postcards total.



Sign Up to Serve as a Scripture Reader or Liturgist

Helping lead worship is a spiritual practice that enriches our common life together and helps us reflect the Beloved Community that is the Body of Christ. We hope you will consider signing up to serve as a liturgist or scripture reader this fall. Liturgists will either offer a call to worship reflection on our fall theme "The Realm of God," with prompts provided by Rev. Amanda or lead a prayer of confession and words of assurance. We also need scripture readers each Sunday. Please take a moment to [click here](#) to sign up if you are willing to serve in this way. Or, simply email Rev. Amanda with dates when you are available and she will get you signed up. Thank you for contributing to "the work of the people" by sharing your gifts in this way.



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 Ensekifrank (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 love for the family of Eric, Anna, Riley, and Archer Kiss following Eric's hospitalization due to pancreatic cancer.

Prayers of healing for Susan Hendler, Rev. Amanda's mother-in-law, following a fall and broken hip.

Prayers of comfort for the Pence-Bucks family, following the death of Travis Johnson, Natalie's birth father. May he rest in peace.

Prayers of strength for Daniel Zawada, father of Mike, who was hospitalized following a fall and major head injury.

Prayers of comfort for the Prentice family following the death of Scott's brother, Kirk.

Prayers of gratitude for the life of the Rev. Dr. Barbara Brown Zikmund, torch-blazing feminist scholar, author of a ground-breaking book on the Hidden Histories of the UCC, and former member of First Church.

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

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, October 4: World

Communion Sunday

9:30 am - Bible Workbench

10:30 am - Worship Service &
Sunday School

11:45 am - Feast of Global Bread
during Coffee Hour

Tuesday, October 6

10:30 am - Staff Meeting

6:00 pm - Drop-In Center

7:00 pm - Worship Commission

Wednesday, October 7

12:15 pm - Break Away Meditation

7:00 pm - Care of Parish
Commission

Sunday, October 11

9:30 am - Bible Workbench

10:30 am - Worship Service &
Sunday School

11:45 am - Coffee Hour

12:00 pm - Faith & Democracy
Nurture

Reminders and Quick Links

Upcoming Coffee Hour Hosts

October 4: Andrew Hamilton & Dwan Reece

October 11: Nora Marsh, Polly Gordon, Judith Gray

October 18: *Coffee Hour Hosts Needed*

[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

Rev. Dr. LaTayna Purnell's Installation Service on October 25

Dear FCC Family,

I would love for you to join me for my installation on **October 25 at 2:00 p.m. at SSUMC!** FCC has played such an important part in this call and in the life of my family. It would mean so much to celebrate this special moment with you.

I would also love to invite you to participate in the service. If you would like to sing with the choir, please email me at lataynap@cccsliverspring.org so I can connect you with our music director. If you would like to participate in another way, please reach out—I would be happy to find a place for you in the service. Rev. Amanda will be preaching, which will be an extra treat!

Thank you for the love, encouragement, and support you have shared with me and my family. I hope to see many of you on October 25!

With love and gratitude,

Pastor LaTayna

lataynap@cccsliverspring.org

POTOMAC ASSOCIATION
CENTRAL ATLANTIC CONFERENCE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Many Churches
One Spirit
A More Just World



You are invited to the

Service of Installation

Rev. Dr. LaTayna Purnell

AS ASSOCIATE MINISTER
FOR CARE AND COMMUNITY

Christ Congregational Church, UCC

The Potomac Association of the Central Atlantic Conference, United Church of Christ, together with Christ Congregational Church, UCC, joyfully invites clergy, delegates, friends, and members of the wider church to celebrate this sacred moment of covenant, call, and shared ministry.

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2026
2:00 PM**

**SILVER SPRING UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH**
Silver Spring, Maryland



CLERGY ARE INVITED
TO ROBE AND PROCESS.
Please arrive early to robe.

A RECEPTION WILL FOLLOW
THE SERVICE.
All are welcome!

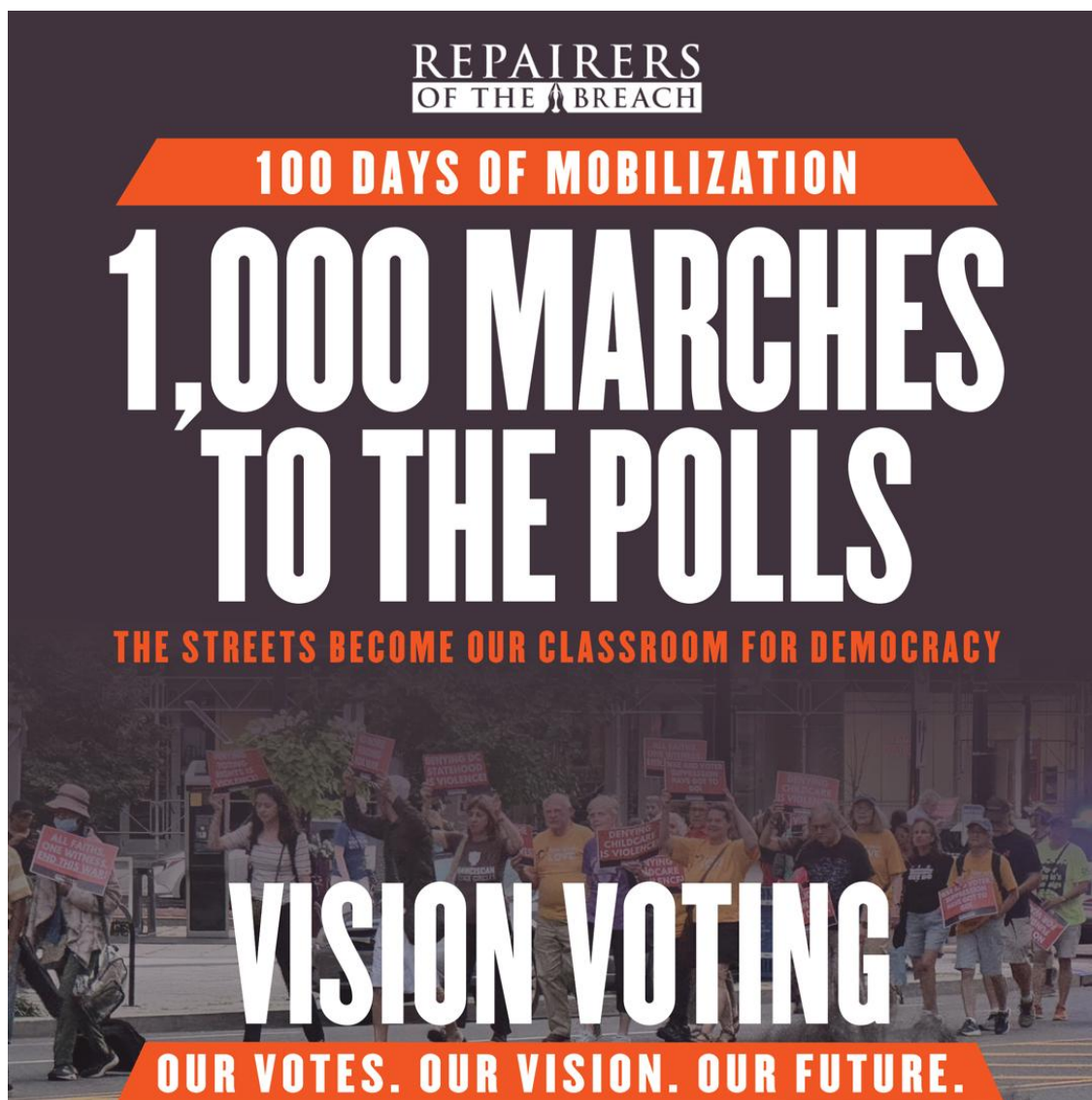
*Come give thanks for this new season of ministry
and celebrate the covenant that binds pastor, congregation,
association, and the wider church together.*

FAITH • COMMUNITY • JUSTICE • TOGETHER

October 26: March to the Polls

Join us on the first day of early voting in DC. We'll gather on Monday October

26 at 5:30 pm near Black Lives Matter Plaza and march together to the MLK Jr library early voting site. More information available [here](#).



Immigration Film Fest 2026

The [Immigration Film Fest](#) is hosted by [KAMA DC](#), a volunteer-run nonprofit dedicated to providing a platform for immigrants and refugees in the DMV to share their skills and stories. Now in the festival's 13th year, we are bringing you a hybrid film festival with virtual screenings for 29 films via Eventive, and four in-person screenings in Washington, DC the first and second weekends of October. Help us celebrate and honor the stories of immigrants and refugees at this critical moment in history, when our immigrant communities are facing a perilous and divisive political and legal environment. We hope to see you at the festival!



Music of our Neighbors

IMMIGRATION 20 FILM FEST 26

TICKETS NOW AVAILABLE

IN-PERSON

Oct 2-3 @ Festival Center
Oct 10-11 @ MLK Jr. Library

& VIRTUAL

October 2-11, streaming

*Short and feature-length films, filmmaker Q&As,
community gatherings, food, and more!*

Left Lane Straight

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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