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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

First Church Weekly Newsletter
October 30, 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.

[Worship with Us](#)
[Announcements](#)
[Prayer List](#)
[Happening at First Church this Week](#)
[Reminders and Quick Links](#)
[Community Bulletin Board](#)

Worship with Us



Dia de Los Muertos vigil in San Diego to honor those who died in ICE custody.

Join us at 10:30 in the sanctuary or by Zoom as we mark All Saints' Sunday and celebrate communion. For those joining us in person, please place a photograph of a beloved departed one on our worship table among the votive candles before or during the prelude or during the passing of the peace. Lucille Dickinson will lead us in the prayer of confession and words of assurance. Nora Marsh and Peter Byrne will serve as our scripture readers with focus texts from Matthew 5:1-12 (the Beatitudes) and Revelation 7:9-17 (God will wipe away every tear). Rev. Amanda will preach. Diane Brenneman, Nora Marsh, and Robin Olson will provide a musical offering of "Will the Circle Be Unbroken" in tribute to Dolly Parton. Rev. Amanda and Rev. Sam will lead us in remembering that great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us, speaking names and tolling a bell as part of our communion liturgy. The Sanctuary Team will participate in a reading of the names of those slain by ICE and those who have died in detention camps in the past year. When the bell tolls, the congregation is invited to respond "May they rest in peace." We will invite those in the sanctuary to come forward to receive communion from one of our two stations; on the way forward, they may light a votive candle in memory of a departed one. If you are joining us from home, please prepare your table with bread and cup, which we will bless and break together. Join us for one of the most deeply felt services of the year.

Our children will begin the morning in Sunday school in the Christian Education

suite with Rev. Sam. They will join us in the sanctuary for communion in the second half of the worship service.

Following worship, all are invited to join us for a potluck meal in the Community Hall. Please bring your favorite fall dish to share; we especially welcome vegan and gluten free options in order to ensure we have dietary options for all.

Open this week's worship folder.

A Moment for Stewardship

Dear First Church,

As I reflect on stewardship this season, I think back to our summer theme of "unsung heroes." Stewardship is often unsung. We fill out our commitment cards and set up our automatic payments. It's not visible. There's not necessarily a clear connection between a dollar we give and an impact that First Church has in our beloved community or in our wider community.

But that doesn't mean it's not important. Our financial support for First Church is essential. I've always known that our church depends on pledges to carry out our mission. After serving for almost two years on the Finance Commission, I have an even stronger appreciation for the importance of every single pledge and offering that our community offers.

We've had systems in our building that needed emergency repairs. We have a growing youth cohort that needs expanded Christian Education programming. And we are in the midst of enhancing our visibility and outreach to potential new members so that we can continue to grow our congregation. All of this requires your financial support.

Stewardship season is broader than financial pledges though. It's also about reflecting on the time and talents you can commit to First Church in the coming year. While these volunteer positions may be more visible than financial contributions, they are often still somewhat unsung. But, again, they are vital to the life and mission of our church. We have so many unsung heroes in our midst. During this stewardship season, I hope you will join them!

In Stewardship,
Courtney McCaffrey

Commitment cards are available from an usher at Sunday worship or online.

Announcements

Daylight Saving Time Ends This Saturday



All Saints Sunday, November 1: Bring Photograph of Departed Loved Ones



On November 1st, as we mark All Saints Sunday, we invite you to bring a framed photograph of a beloved, departed one. You can place your photograph on the worship table (among the votive candles) before worship, during the prelude, or during the passing of the peace. Those worshiping from home are invited to set your table with a photograph, votive candle, and the elements of bread and cup for communion Sunday.

Care of Parish Updates: November 1 Potluck and Coffee Hour Hosts

Get ready for the not-so-scary Halloween Community Potluck on November 1. Feel free to wear Halloween costumes and bring a dish good for the body and the soul.

We also continue to need coffee hour hosts for the month of November. Please check the Sign Up Genius and see when you can help. If you need more information or have questions, please contact Nick McConnell (nicholasmcconnell@msn.com).

Thank you,
Care of Parish

Election Eve 16th Street Candlelight Vigil: Nov. 2



On the evening before the final day of voting in our national election, please join a candlelight standing vigil with many houses of worship along 16th Street NW, from the White House to Silver Spring, to shine a light for democracy, peace and hope. The vigil will take place from 5:30 - 6:30 PM. Sixteenth Street is DC's "corridor of faith," a 6.5-mile thoroughfare lined by nearly 50 houses of worship. In these challenging days of economic insecurity, the hollowing out of our civil service, war, with ICE and the National Guard on our streets, First Church will join many other religious communities in bearing witness to the love that grounds us as people of faith and good will. The First Church contingency will gather in the Black Lives Matter Plaza in front of St. John's church. Rev. Amanda will supply vigil candles; please feel free to bring battery operated candles or flashlights if you prefer. We are also invited to bring signs expressing our prayers and hopes for our country. **This is a positive, non-partisan vigil, so please only bring respectful signs that do not promote or oppose any candidate or party.** We encourage you to use democracy, peace, and hope as themes. To RSVP, contact Rev. Amanda.

Welcome Gil Elie, Audio Visual Technician!



Gil Elie grew up in Arlington, VA, in a lively household as one of eight siblings. He attended Northern Virginia Community College in Alexandria and Alderson Broaddus University, a small liberal arts college in Philippi, West Virginia, where he earned his associate degree.

Shortly after college, Gil discovered his passion for audiovisual production and has since spent nearly a decade building a career in the industry. His experience has taken him across the country, supporting corporate conferences, live events, and productions of all sizes. He is also the founder of The Meeting Group LLC, an audiovisual production company serving the DC metropolitan area and beyond. Gil enjoys using his technical expertise and creativity to bring people together and create meaningful experiences.

Outside of work, Gil is very family-oriented and especially enjoys spending quality time with his nieces and nephews. His interests include cooking, traveling, sports, wildlife, and exploring the outdoors, particularly America's national parks. He also has a strong interest in world history and enjoys learning about different cultures and places. Gil values genuine connections, new experiences, and opportunities to make a positive impact in the communities around him.

Help Support the Kiss Family



Beloved Community, following Eric Kiss' diagnosis of metastatic cancer, Anna provides updates on a CaringBridge site 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.

Movie and Game Night: November 7

On Saturday, November 7, you are invited to join the Children and Youth of First Church and People's Congregational for a fun night of movies, games, snacks and joy! We will meet in the Community Hall and Chapel from 5:30pm to 8:30pm.

We hope you can make it! Email Rev. Sam at mcferran.sam@gmail.com if you have any questions.

Book Talk with Rev. Dr. Jason Carson Wilson: Nov. 8

Following worship on November 8th, join us in the Community Hall at noon for a talk with Jason Carson Wilson to discuss his book *Makeshift Messiahs: Why the American Right Keeps Creating Political Saviors*--a timely look at the pattern of casting strongmen as saviors, and what it will take to resist that pull. Jason's book is available for purchase in print or as an ebook. Several copies will be available to borrow from our church library for those interested.

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.

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 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 and blessing for the Rev. Kaeley and Benjamin Wood, following their wedding ceremony.
Prayers of healing for Kristen Wheeler following surgery on her shoulder.
Prayers of love for the family of Eric, Anna, Riley, and Archer Kiss following Eric's diagnosis of metastatic 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 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, November 1:
All Saints Sunday
9:30 am - Bible Workbench
10:30 am - Worship Service & Sunday School
11:45 am - Coffee Hour
12:00 pm - Community Potluck

Monday, November 2
5:30 pm - Election Eve Vigil

Tuesday, November 3
10:30 am - Staff Meeting
6:00 pm - Drop-In Center
7:00 pm - Worship Commission

Wednesday, November 4
12:15 pm - Break Away Meditation
7:00 pm - Care of Parish Commission

Saturday, November 7
5:30 pm - Movie and Game Night

Sunday, November 8
9:30 am - Bible Workbench
10:30 am - Worship Service & Sunday School
11:45 am - Coffee Hour
12:00 pm - Book Talk with Rev. Dr. Jason Carson Wilson

Reminders and Quick Links

Upcoming Coffee Hour Hosts
November 1: Community Potluck
November 8: Nick & Nan McConnell
November 15: Sophie Jones, Moira Jones, Michael Enseki-Frank
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

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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