



Praise God, all you nations! Extol her, all you peoples! For great is her steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of God endures forever. Praise God!

- Psalm 117

Regathering Season
September 17, 2023

**FIRST CHURCH
IN CAMBRIDGE**

Congregational 1633-1636
United Church of Christ
Garden and Mason Streets
Cambridge, Massachusetts

WELCOME TO FIRST CHURCH IN CAMBRIDGE...

Grounded in God • Growing in Community • Acting in Love

We're glad you are worshiping with us today! First Church is a vibrant, multi-generational, engaged, urban church. We care a lot about each other and what's happening in the world around us. Wherever you are on the journey of faith, you are welcome here.

September 17, 2023

FIRST CHURCH
IN CAMBRIDGE
CONGREGATIONAL
387 YEARS
ON THE WAY
1 6 3 6 – 2 0 2 3

Preaching Today Ahmaad Edmund, *Pastoral Associate*
Liturgist Bruce Hoppe
Assisting in Worship Carla Aravelo, *Pastoral Associate*
Susie Neubauer, *offering Ministry Moment*
Lee Prouty, *tech support*
Dan Smith, *Senior Minister*
Peter Sykes, *Music Director*

Bulletin Cover Image Psalm 117 collage by Audrey Bellinger
All Psalm collages can be viewed in [a digital gallery](#) on our website.

Today's Programs and Events

9:30 a.m. Adult Formation: Blessing the Ties, Harter Room and [via Zoom](#)
10:15 a.m. Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary
11:00 a.m. Hybrid Morning Worship, Sanctuary and [via livestream](#)
11:20 a.m. Church School: Godly Play, Middlers, and Bible 101 classes
12:00 p.m. *Gates of Paradise* Art Exhibit, MJH
12:15 p.m. Newcomers Meet and Greet, Hastings Common
12:15 p.m. Welcome Corps Info Session, Harter Room and [via Zoom](#)
12:30 p.m. Confirmation Orientation for Students & Parents, Library
2:00 p.m. Cambridge Common Youth Group, church lawn
7:30 p.m. Night Song, Sanctuary and [via livestream](#)

New to First Church?

Have you just begun joining us for worship? Consider filling out a visitor card found on the small clipboards or this "[virtual visitor card](#)" so that we might connect with you about our community.

Give to First Church

You can give online: www.firstchurchcambridge.org/give or by texting "\$_" to: 1-844-996-0982.

Contact a Pastor or Staff Member

Find [contact information](#) for our ministerial, program, and building staff on our website.
For general information and inquiries: info@firstchurchcambridge.org

Minister On Call

If you have an urgent pastoral need, please call 617-547-2724 ext. 222. Your call will be routed to a First Church minister based on a rotating schedule that covers staff time off.

Have a church program or event to promote?
Complete the [First Church Communications Request](#) form.
Have an edit or update for our website?
Complete the [FCC Website Changes](#) form

GATHERING

VOLUNTARY

Ciacona in E minor

Dietrich Buxtehude

*HYMN 407

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

*GREETING

Bruce Hoppe

L: Siblings in the Spirit, whether you are here for an hour or a lifetime,
welcome to this household of grace!

C: Here, where our lives are grounded in the hope and healing of God;

L: here, where we grow together in community and belonging;

C: here, where we partner in love with God and one another.

L: Sisters, brothers, siblings in the Spirit, come gather in.

**C: Let there be life in this house,
and may God bless the ties that bind us in love!**

WORDS OF WELCOME

ANTHEM

This Little Light Of Mine

Trad., arr. George Mabry

CONFESSING

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

SUNG PRAYER

Sanctuary

**Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary,
pure and holy, tried and true.**

**With thanksgiving, I'll be a living
sanctuary for you.**

(Twice through)

SILENCE

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

*GREETING OF PEACE

Please turn to your immediate neighbors and offer a handshake, or a hug! Or if you prefer to maintain social distance, fold your hands or arms in a sign of peace. We want everyone to be comfortable; today let there be no spiritual distance between us.

**You are invited to stand. Hymns preceded by a "C" are found in the beginning section of the hymnal. This section contains hymns written and composed by current and past members of First Church in Cambridge.*

***HYMN 442**

What a Friend We Have in Jesus

Children up through 7th grade are now invited to Church School classes. Godly Play (PreK-4th grade), Middlers (5th grade), and Bible 101 (6/7th grade) students can meet their teachers at the side door by the Children’s Book Corner. Caregivers can find the children in the Chapel after worship.

OPENING THE WORD

PRAYER FOR UNDERSTANDING

READING

Judges 7:1-9

SERMON

Ahmaad Edmund

SHARING OUR LIFE TOGETHER

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dan Smith

MINISTRY MOMENT

Susie Neubauer

PRAYERS FOR THE CHURCH AND WORLD

Carla Arevalo

L: God be with you.

C: And also with you.

L: Let us pray... *(silence, intercessions, and the Lord’s Prayer)*

THE LORD’S PRAYER

(Please pray this prayer in words most meaningful to your heart.)

All: Our Creator, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

INVITATION TO OFFERING



Give Online



Give by Text



I’ve Given Already

OFFERTORY

Give Almes of Thy Goods

Christopher Tye

*Give almes of thy goods, and turn never thy face from any poor one;
and then the face of the Lord shall not be turned away from thee. - Tobit 4:7*

***DOXOLOGY**

**Praise God, the Source of life and birth,
Praise God, the Word, who came to earth,
Praise God, the Spirit, holy flame,
All glory, honor, to God’s name. Amen.**

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

GOING FORTH

***HYMN 241**

We Will Build Your Church, O Christ

***BENEDICTION**

***CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE**

Thuma Mina

Hymn 344

1. (Send me, Lord.)

**Send me, Jesus, send me, Jesus,
send me, Jesus, send me, Lord.**

2. (Lead me, Lord.) **Lead me, Jesus...**

3. (Fill me, Lord.) **Fill me, Jesus...**

4. (Thuma mina.)

**Thuma mina, thuma mina,
thuma mina, somandla.**

VOLUNTARY

Nun bitten wir den Heiligen Geist

Dietrich Buxtehude

First Church Land Acknowledgment

We, gathered here, acknowledge that we are meeting on land which has been the traditional ancestral homeland of the Massachusetts people. We acknowledge that this land is unceded and remains sacred to the Massachusett, and to their close neighbors and relatives, the Nipmuc and Wampanoag peoples.



SCAN ME

You can find a longer version of this acknowledgment [here](#) or by scanning the QR code.

OPENING HYMN

407 Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

1. Come, thou Fount of ev-'ry bless-ing, tune my heart to sing thy grace;
 2. Here I pause a - long my jour-ney; by thy help thus far I've come;
 3. O to grace how great a debt - or dai - ly I am called to be!

streams of mer - cy, nev - er ceas - ing, call for songs of loud - est praise.
 and I hope, by thy great mer - cy, safe - ly to ar - rive at home.
 Let thy good - ness, like a fet - ter, bind my wan - dering heart to thee.

Teach me some me - lo - dious son - net, sung by flam - ing tongues a - bove.
 Je - sus sought me when a stran - ger, wan - dering from the fold of God;
 Prone to wan - der, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love;

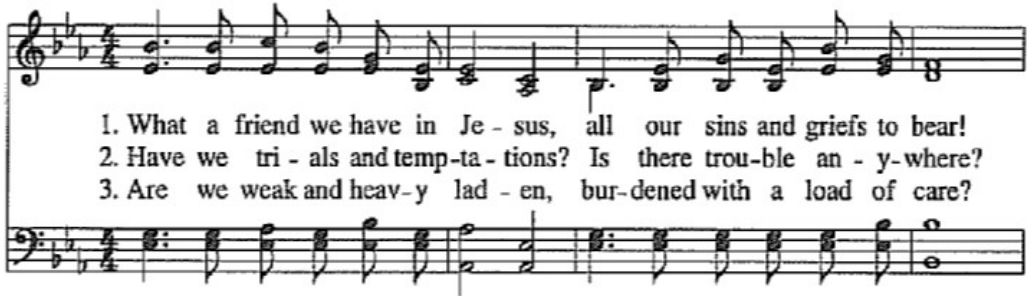
Praise the mount! I'm fixed up - on it, mount of thy re - deem - ing love.
 came to res - cue me from dan - ger, gave his bod - y, shed his blood.
 here's my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for thy courts a - bove.

WORDS: Robert Robinson, 1758, alt.
 MUSIC: Wyeth's Repository of Sacred Music, Part Second, 1813

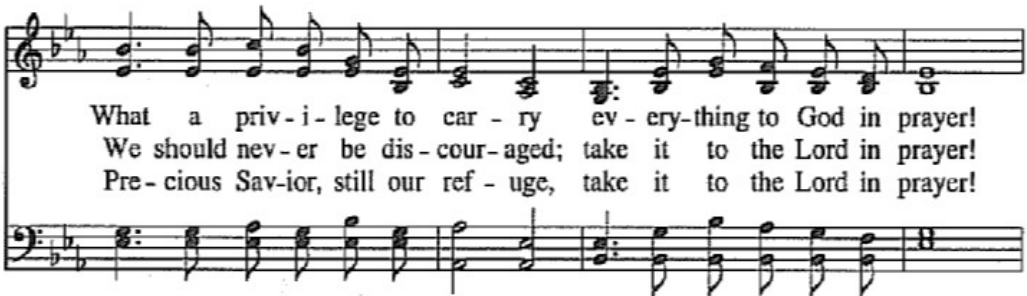
NETTLETON
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442

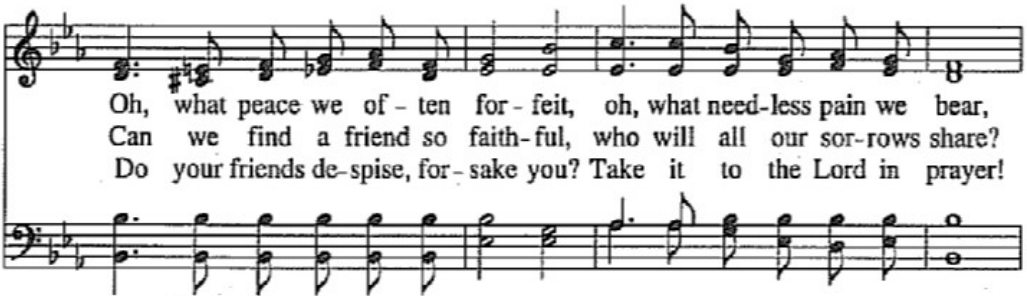
What a Friend We Have in Jesus



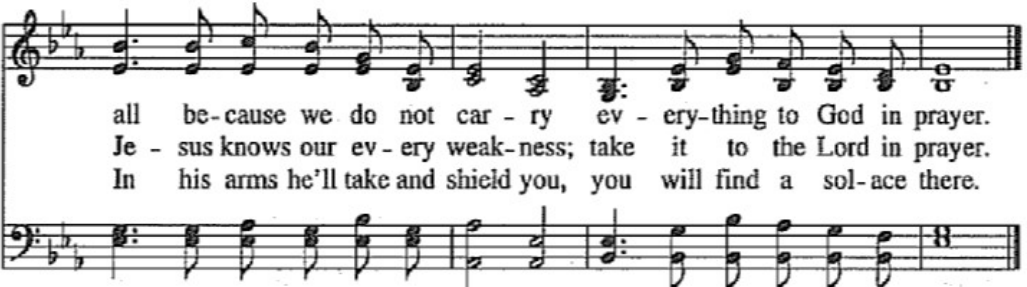
1. What a friend we have in Je - sus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
 2. Have we tri - als and temp-ta - tions? Is there trou-ble an - y-where?
 3. Are we weak and heav-y lad - en, bur-dened with a load of care?



What a priv-i-lege to car - ry ev - ery-thing to God in prayer!
 We should nev - er be dis - cour - aged; take it to the Lord in prayer!
 Pre - cious Sav - ior, still our ref - uge, take it to the Lord in prayer!



Oh, what peace we of - ten for - feit, oh, what need-less pain we bear,
 Can we find a friend so faith-ful, who will all our sor - rows share?
 Do your friends de - spise, for - sake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer!



all be - cause we do not car - ry ev - ery-thing to God in prayer.
 Je - sus knows our ev - ery weak - ness; take it to the Lord in prayer.
 In his arms he'll take and shield you, you will find a sol - ace there.

CLOSING HYMN

We Will Build Your Church, O Christ 241

1. We will build your church, O Christ, with met - tle, mor - tar, flesh and
 2. We will build your church, O Christ, with hope and heal - ing, faith and
 3. We would be your church, O Christ. Break forth your heal - ing, pour forth
 4. We would be your church, O Christ, O lead us through the trials of

stone to bring you praise and give that praise a home. And
 trust that care and in - sight nour - ish things un - seen. And
 life, and bring to un - ion those once set a - part. And
 life and call us, claim us, that your realm may thrive. And

when we find our cher-ished tem-ple walls us from a world in need,
 if the knowl-edge that we nur-ture lim-its vi-sions of your peace,
 when we stif - fen to your knead-ing, when our sor-row bends our knees,
 when we love our church life such that we for-get it first serves thee,

lift us through the gift of gos-pel, dy-ing, ris-ing, borne by thee.

WORDS: Gail S. Ransom, 1984, alt.
 MUSIC: Gail S. Ransom, 1984; harm. FCC, 1997

NEEDVILLE
 78 10.9787

COMMUNITY PRAYERS

- We pray for the family of longtime First Church member John Hildebidle, who died recently in Alexandria, VA. We pray especially for his children Nick and Susannah, who grew up at First Church, and for their families as they grieve.
- We pray for Julie Palmer, her wife Becky Moyer, and their daughter Ally as they mourn the loss of Julie's father Frank Palmer.
- We pray for Norman Bendroth as he recovers from hip replacement surgery, for Anne McClintock as she heals from foot surgery, and for Anita Anger as she negotiates rehab after a fall, that their healing and strength might proceed quickly, and their pain diminish quickly.
- We pray for Nancy Kilburn and her family as they mourn the loss of her mother Penny, who died recently.
- We pray for all who are in treatment for cancer and other ongoing health challenges: Carol Wilson-Braun, who is managing slow-progressing ALS; Jim Rae, Ami Brenner's father; Ellen Smith, Devin Hansen's aunt; Judith Semmler, Alice Napoleon Jones's mother; Karen Anne Zee's daughter Becky Collet, and her sons-in-law, Denis Collet and Stewart Bailey; Beth and Polly, Ann McCann's sisters. We pray also for friend of Homeless Ministries Brian O'Donovan, who is receiving hospice care.
- We pray for the people of Morocco in the wake of the earthquake that claimed the lives of over 2,900 people last week. We pray also for the people of Libya, where the death toll is over 5,000 after disastrous flooding.
- We pray for the town of Leominster, MA, and surrounding communities as they deal with the effects of catastrophic flooding earlier this week. We continue to pray for our rapidly warming planet and for redoubled efforts to reduce fossil fuel emissions.
- We continue to pray for all those impacted by the violence of war and political upheaval, including in Ukraine, Sudan, and Haiti, and especially those displaced and seeking refuge in other countries.
- We pray for all refugees and migrants who make often life-threatening border crossings over land and open water to escape poverty, political persecution, violence, and climate-related disaster.
- We pray for all whose lives are touched by our nation's raging epidemic of gun violence, and those most recently impacted by the racially motivated shooting in Jacksonville, FL. We pray for ongoing advocacy to create lasting change in our country's gun safety laws.
- We pray for the wellbeing and safety of our trans and gender non-conforming siblings as they face the impact of vitriolic public discourse and of state laws that restrict and criminalize transgender health care, personal expression, and wider LGBTQ+ education.
- We pray for those most affected by changes in reproductive rights: for all those struggling with the moral and political complexities of pregnancy and childbearing, and for patients and healthcare providers who are unable to give and receive care in their own states.

TODAY AT FIRST CHURCH

- We pray for the 14 men finding sustenance and protection in our First Church Shelter; and we pray for the guests of the Friday Café, who are finding resources and listening ears.

Join the [First Church List](#) to see and offer up more community prayer requests.

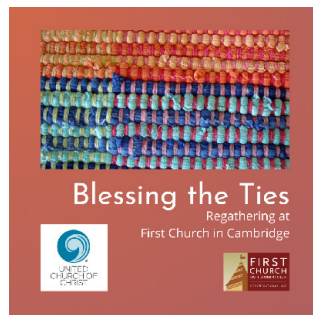
In Memoriam

A memorial service for beloved First Church member John Hidlebidle will take place at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, October 7, in the Sanctuary and via livestream, with a reception to follow in Margaret Jewett Hall.

Blessing the Ties & Honoring our Ancestors at First Church & Beyond Today and Sunday, September 24, 9:30 - 10:15 a.m.

Harter Room and [via Zoom](#)

Join Dan Smith, Sue Reynolds, and Phil Jones for a two-part 9:30 Hour series aimed at honoring and better understanding our spiritual forebears! On September 17, we offer a brief introduction and discussion of First Church's long history (387 years as a continuing congregation) and also share a bit about our covenantal ties to our wider denomination, the United Church of Christ. Phil was a recent delegate to our national UCC "Synod" gathering in June and can share about what the UCC is and what "we" are up to now! On September 24, we explore questions of how we can better honor our familial and spiritual ancestors (benevolent and otherwise), and how we might consider being "better ancestors" for those who are yet to come!



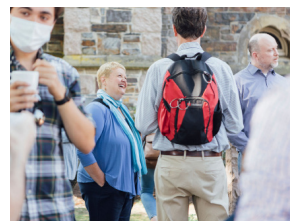
Gates of Paradise: An Art Exhibit by Henry Gates Today, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m., Margaret Jewett Hall

Gates of Paradise, an exhibition of ten paintings of the Hebrew Bible by First Church member Henry Gates, is on display in MJH. The originals are 15th century bronze doors to the Duomo in Florence, Italy. They illustrate the gathered people of Israel with all the Biblical energy and turmoil of Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, and Kings. As we regather, these scenes remind of our initial covenant in faith.

Newcomers Meet and Greet

Today, 12:15 - 12:45 p.m., Hastings Common

Those feeling new to First Church are warmly invited to meet up directly after worship in Hastings Common (through the door by the large screens at the front of the Sanctuary). Some of what you can expect: friendly connections, questions answered, snacks, and an informal atmosphere for conversation. Our first Joining Sunday of the season is tentatively scheduled for October 22. Questions? Please reach out to [Carla Arevalo](#).



TODAY AT FIRST CHURCH



Welcome Corps Resettlement Information Session Today, 12:15 - 1:15 p.m., Harter Room and [via Zoom](#) “First Church & Friends” is an official sponsor group for [Welcome Corps](#), and two refugees from Sub-Saharan Africa are arriving to us soon! Do you want to learn more about what this will mean for our community and how you can help to welcome and resettle them? Please attend a special information session after worship on Sunday, September 17, led by special guest Ann O’Brien, Director of Sponsorship at IRIS (International Refugee and Immigrant Services). [IRIS](#) is a founding member of the recently launched Welcome Corps national program. Based in New Haven while working across the nation, IRIS

has welcomed over 8,000 refugees together with community sponsor groups such as ours. Ann will be joined by Dr. Simone Bamba, leader of [Mission Maranatha](#), a Welcome Corps sponsor group from West Roxbury similar to ours that recently welcomed a refugee from Somalia. Learn more about Welcome Corps refugee resettlement from those with recent experience, and bring all your questions!

Do you have any extra room in your home and heart to help house Welcome Corps refugees arriving in America?

We are asking for volunteers able to house two refugees for 2-3 months. They will be related adults, so they can share one bedroom. You may have heard that Governor Healey has declared a State of Emergency regarding the lack of housing for refugees and has asked for residents to open their homes. We at First Church are subject to the same issues in finding housing for the WelcomeCorps newcomers. If you think you might be able to provide housing or know someone who can, please call Alice Kidder at 617-276-6227 to discuss, or email her at flintkiddr@aol.com.

Confirmation Class Orientation

Sunday, September 17, 12:30 - 1:15 p.m., Library

This year’s Confirmation journey for 8th and 9th graders begins with an orientation meeting for students and parents after worship. Sarah Higginbotham will introduce the program alongside teachers Carla Arevalo and Phil Jones. Classes take place twice monthly on Sunday mornings from 9:30 to 10:45 a.m., leading up to Confirmation Sunday on Pentecost, May 19, 2024.



TODAY AT FIRST CHURCH

Welcome Table

You may have noticed a Welcome Table as you entered the Sanctuary through the main door into the Narthex. The table is part of a new initiative called

“First Friends” that is aimed at new people coming in our doors. Our goal is to connect newcomers with a First Friend within our congregation. For the next several Sundays, we will meet people at the Welcome Table just before worship and also at Coffee Hour. If you happen to meet anyone new, please point them to our table! When the calendar allows, we will be sharing more information during a Ministry Moment. Questions? Seek out Alex Steinert-Evoy, Martha Mueller Cook, or Ginny Harlan.



Cambridge Common Youth Group

Sunday, September 17, 2:00 - 3:30 p.m., First Church Lawn

In 2023-24, First Church youth will join up with teens from neighboring churches to form the Cambridge Common Youth Group. Teens from 8th to 12th grade (which includes our Confirmation Class) are invited to gather for monthly service opportunities and social events on third Sundays from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m. Stay tuned for more information. Questions? Please contact [Ahmaad Edmund](#).

Call for Fall Faith & Life Group Leaders by TODAY, September 17

Are you interested in leading a small group over Zoom or in person this Fall? Led by First Church members, Faith & Life Groups are designed to encourage meaningful connections through shared interests, whether exploring a spiritual practice, opening our eyes to the beauty around us, delving into a challenging social issue, or attending to significant life stages (parenting, aging, job transitions, etc.). Faith & Life Groups involve making a short-term commitment (a single session to several weeks, depending on the group). Pitch your idea for a Fall Faith & Life Group to Beth Spaulding (bspaulding69@gmail.com) or Dan Smith (dsmith@firstchurchcambridge.org). **Deadline for proposals is today!**



Night Song

Sunday evenings, 7:30 - 8:15p.m.

Sanctuary and via livestream

Night Song is a worship opportunity that offers stillness and sublime music in a darkened sanctuary for respite and reset...

[Read more about Night Song.](#)

REGATHERING SEASON AT FIRST CHURCH



Last Call to Register:

All-Church Fall Retreat at Craigville Retreat Center Friday, September 29 – Sunday, October 1

Register now to join us on the Cape at [Craigville Retreat Center](#) for a weekend of community-building in fellowship, formation, and fun. All ages are invited to come together as a multigenerational community to talk, laugh, play, dance, eat, sing, worship, and connect! Take advantage of scheduled large group gatherings, small group sessions,

supervised play/crafting time for kids, worship, group games, and more. Or, opt for a quiet walk on the beach, bird-watching at the marsh, or whatever your soul needs. Arrive on Friday evening, September 29, and stay through midday on Sunday, October 1, for the full event; or come for a portion of the weekend, for just one night, or even a daytrip on Saturday. [Complete this registration form](#) by tomorrow, Monday, September 18.

Earth Defenders Banner on First Church Lawn, September 11 - October 9

First Church is hosting a banner commemorating lives of indigenous persons who were killed for their defense of the earth's forests, water, air, animals, and their communities' children. The banner, already out of date, commemorates persons murdered while defending natural resources from destruction by irresponsible agribusiness, mining interests, and fossil fuel extractors. The QR code in the corner of the banner leads to further background by [Global Witness](#), which provides regularly updated data on the killings of defenders. The banner not only honors lives, but raises questions of sacrifice. Who are those who sacrifice for others' welfare? What are we willing to sacrifice for protecting people and nature from destructive acts by corporations and governments?



*Photo by Susan Redlich
L to R: Alfred Brownell
(Liberian lawyer), Lynne
Cherry (children's book
author), Joia Mukherjee
(chief medical officer,
Partners in Health),
David Hughes (Rutgers
U. professor)*

Braver Angels Braver Angels Workshop: Depolarizing Within Saturday, September 23, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., via Zoom

Gather with members and friends of Harvard Square churches for a free, online workshop to become more aware of your "inner polarizer" and learn methods for disagreeing without contempt and ridicule. Organized by [Braver Angels](#), the "Depolarizing Within" workshop is designed to foster skills to help you lessen the effects of polarization when you encounter them in your political conversations. For people of faith, civil discourse begins in recognizing the image of God in our conversation partner. We can have mutual respect for each other because of our belief that all are children of God. Respect, not agreement, is an essential key for a healthy discussion. This workshop addresses how we may inadvertently be complicit in, or possibly even encourage, polarization. [Learn more and register here.](#)

REGATHERING SEASON AT FIRST CHURCH

Guest Preacher Rev. Liz Walker
Sunday, September 24 at 11:00 a.m.
Sanctuary and via livestream

Join us as we joyfully welcome Rev. Liz Walker as guest preacher for our morning worship service. Rev. Walker is the recently retired pastor of Roxbury Presbyterian Church, an ordained minister in the African Methodist Episcopal tradition, and a veteran television journalist, the first African-American weeknight news anchor in Boston. Co-founder of Embrace Boston, she is currently serving as Executive Director of the Social Impact Center and the “Can We Talk” network. With 14 local and national “Can We Talk” chapters (and counting), Rev. Walker has been expanding her Roxbury-based model of transformative, trauma-informed care that is creating sacred spaces for people and communities impacted by violence and poverty to share their stories of trauma, loss, grief, and hope. We are thrilled that Rev. Walker will be leading us and breaking open God’s holy word for us!



Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO) Forum

Sunday, September 24, 12:15 - 1:15 p.m., Margaret Jewett Hall

Join us after worship to learn more about GBIO at First Church! We are headed into a new season of advocacy, turning our focus toward a new campaign to work on growing a diverse behavioral health workforce to meet our communities’ needs! We will discuss our successes and challenges

during the housing justice campaign last year and upcoming events, including information about our upcoming in-district meetings with local legislators this fall. Come to learn more about what GBIO is and how you can get involved! Questions? Please contact Casey Marsh: kc.marsh103@gmail.com

2023 SNEUCC Justice Summit:

Trans and Nonbinary Belonging in the Church

Saturday, October 7, 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Old South Church in Boston

The Southern New England UCC’s annual Justice Summit in 2023 will center on trans and nonbinary belonging in the church. The Justice Summit is a hybrid event, being hosted at Old South Church in Boston, with options for in-person or on-line participation. ***As part of a conference-wide initiative on Trans and Nonbinary Affirming Churches, First Church in Cambridge has eight spots reserved at the conference.*** Using one of the registration links below, select the “scholarship” option and indicate your connection to First Church in Cambridge.



[Please register here to attend in person.](#)

[Please register here to attend online.](#)

SMALL GROUP OPPORTUNITIES THIS FALL



Drop-In Bible Study

Thursdays, 6:00 - 7:30 p.m., via Zoom

You're more than welcome to join our weekly Drop-In Bible Study, held every Thursday evening from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. ET, via Zoom. (You'll find the Zoom link in the [Calendar](#) section of our First Church website.) We're all amateurs in the best sense, those who love listening for God's word in scripture: no expertise required! We're just beginning a dive into the Gospel of Luke. No time commitment required—come for one session, a dozen, or more, as your calendar allows. If you're enticed, contact Carter West: cartergw24@gmail.com.



Young Adults: Fall Faith on Tap Series

First Church has an active group of Young Adults that gathers a couple of times each month for food and fellowship. Our ongoing Faith on Tap series is a great way to meet others in their 20s to mid-30s. Come hang out, especially if you're new or feeling new! Our next meet-ups will be **Monday, September 18 at 7:00 p.m. at Bow Market in Somerville**, and **Tuesday, October 3, for Candlepin Bowling at Flatbread (aka Sacco's) in Davis Square**. You can learn more about the group and get on the email list for future events by emailing: youngadults@firstchurchcambridge.org or talking to Phil Jones.



Aging with Grace, Growing in Wisdom

Tuesday, September 19, 3:00 - 4:15 p.m., Harter Room

Join Ginny Harlan, Martha Cook, and Dan Smith for a monthly support group where we offer each other companionship and spiritual resources as we grow into our elderhood. In this special season of our lives, let's explore together some of those Big Questions as we let God's presence and this community hold us. We can become elders together as we seek dignity, courage, grace, hope, peace, and wisdom in the ending phase of our lives. We will use Joan Chittister's book [The Gift of Years](#) as a starting point to conversation and reflection, along with a few practical resources for end-of-life planning. We welcome you – gray hair, wrinkles, and all! Questions? Email Ginny at: vbharlan@yahoo.com.

Fall Faith & Life Group Registration Coming Soon!

Watch for an upcoming announcement to sign up for our Fall round-up of Faith & Life Groups. (And if you would like to propose a Faith & Life Group topic, see page 7 for details!)

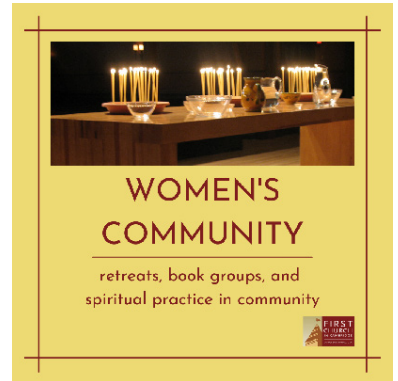
SMALL GROUP OPPORTUNITIES THIS FALL

Women's Community Book Group

Tuesday, September 19

6:00 - 7:30 p.m., via Zoom

Please join us for our first meeting of the new program year! All those in the First Church community who identify as women are welcome. We will start with [Women Talking](#) by Miriam Toews. Based on true events, *Women Talking* describes how a group of women respond when they discover that they have been abused by men in their community. It is a shocking, sad, and intelligent book, surely to prompt an important conversation. We encourage everyone to [see the movie](#) and read the book, as we will discuss both versions. Please join us, and bring a friend!



Reflective Conversations about the Teachings of Jesus with Brent Coffin

Tuesdays, 7:15 - 8:45 a.m., beginning September 26, via Zoom

Brent Coffin leads as we share in weekly reflection about biblical texts, bringing these ancient and often confounding readings into conversation with our own stories and lives.

Meetings begin on Tuesday morning, September 26, from 7:15 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. A time of informal check-in starts promptly at 7:15, followed by framing remarks from Brent, with space for intimate small group listening and sharing to follow. Questions? Please contact Brent at brentbcoffin@gmail.com.



The First Church Choir

Sunday rehearsals at 10:15 a.m., Sanctuary

If you're interested in joining a group of friendly, devoted people who love to sing, look no further! The First Church Choir always welcomes new members. If you can read music and enjoy singing, you'll fit right in. We rehearse on Sunday mornings before the service and occasionally on Thursdays. Speak with [Peter Sykes](#) if you'd like to know more!



REGATHERING SEASON AT FIRST CHURCH

Update on First Church Cockerel Weathervane

The great gilded cockerel weathervane that has stood atop First Church in Cambridge for the last 150 years is coming down to protect it from further damage caused by extreme weather, pollution and its own venerable age. The decision to bring the much-loved cockerel down for its own safety was made in a unanimous vote by the First Church Executive Council and following extensive consultation with nationally recognized experts in the field of American Folk Art and historic weathervanes who strongly advised removal as soon as possible.



The date for its descent is still being determined, but the goal is to make the move as soon as possible. Once the cockerel is safely down and securely stored, church leaders and the congregation will need to consider next steps in the stewardship of this national treasure, including discerning whether the time has come to consider selling it. Another future decision is whether the Shem Drowne original should be replaced with a replica or something else.

Right now, however, the priority is to give the First Church community a chance to reflect on, ask questions about and consider next steps following the decision to remove the cockerel, which was announced to the congregation on Sunday, September 10, 2023. ***A first listening session will be on Sunday, October 8, at 12:30, followed by a weeknight Zoom session on a date to be announced.*** [Read more and find links to drone videos on our website.](#)

New Church Phone System

If you've called the church recently (617-547-2724), you may have noticed that we have a new phone system. You can now reach most staff members by calling the main church number, which then forwards to individual mobile devices or computers via a Zoom communications system. There are menus to reach individual church staff members, and a dial-by-name directory. If you have an office question (ext. 121) or a finance question (ext. 122) or a pastoral need for one of the ministers (ext. 222), or a building question (ext. 322), those extensions will connect you to available staff. The First Church Shelter phone number remains the same (617-661-1873), but you can also reach the Shelter from the main church number. Please be patient with us as we learn how to use the new system!



REGATHERING SEASON AT FIRST CHURCH

An Appeal from the Gifts Discernment Committee

First Church is an amazing community, and each of us makes a difference here! We each bring a wide variety of life experiences, our own unique humor and insights, and differing gifts or skills. The magic happens when we share them, asking God to help us accomplish together what none of us could accomplish alone. And—surprise!— there is deep joy in getting to know our siblings in faith better, as well as growing in faith and ministry.

Most of us have full schedules and obligations beyond this church. But think for a minute: what could you bring to the magic of this community? The folks on the Gifts Discernment Committee are the matchmakers who try to shepherd your talents and interests to the various committees that lead and enliven our church life.



We welcome a chat if you would like to imagine together some possibilities, based on the amount of time you can share. We welcome suggestions if you know someone who could bring wisdom or talent to a committee—be it Fellowship, Buildings & Grounds, Christian Formation, or maybe Missions & Social Justice, Finance, Shelter Oversight, or Deacons. More information about each of these groups can be found on our website [here](#). Perhaps you have something altogether different in mind, such as helping to organize a particular event? If so, we'd love to hear it.

Do be in touch,

Your Gifts Discernment Committee:

Beth Loomis, Mary Robinson, Dave Kidder, Jenny Stuart, and Gail Breeze

[P.S. Learn more about Gifts Discernment and Service at First Church!](#)



LGBT Asylum Task Force Gala
Saturday, September 30, 5:30 - 10:30 p.m.
Worcester DCU Center, Worcester, MA

You are invited to support the [LGBT Asylum Task Force](#) by attending its annual Gala. As a ministry of the Hadwen Park Congregational Church in Worcester, the LGBT Asylum Task Force currently supports 15 LGBTQ+ persons seeking political asylum in the US. The organization is a recipient of gifts from First Church's Missions & Social Justice Committee. For more information, contact Mary Martha Thiel, or [purchase tickets here](#).



THIS WEEK

Looking ahead to this week's programs and events



Monday, September 18

- 4:30 p.m. Contemplative Practices Gathering, via Zoom
- 7:00 p.m. Deacons' Meeting, Harter Room and via Zoom
- 7:00 p.m. Young Adults: Faith on Tap, Bow Market, Union Square, Somerville

Tuesday, September 19

- 10:30 a.m. Communications Team Meeting, Harter Room
- 1:30 p.m. Beloved Community, via Zoom
- 3:00 p.m. Aging with Grace, Growing in Wisdom, Harter Room and via Zoom
- 6:00 p.m. Women's Community Book Group, via Zoom
- 7:30 p.m. Shelter Oversight Committee, via Zoom

Wednesday, September 20

- 9:30 a.m. Staff Meeting, Harter Room and via Zoom
- 7:30 p.m. Missions & Social Justice Committee, via Zoom

Thursday, September 21

- 6:00 p.m. Drop-In Bible Study, via Zoom
- 7:00 p.m. Stewardship Committee, via Zoom

Friday, September 22

- 12:00 p.m. Friday Café, Margaret Jewett Hall (MJH)

Saturday, September 23

- 9:00 a.m. Braver Angels Workshop: Depolarizing Within, via Zoom

Sunday, September 24

- 9:30 a.m. Adult Formation: Blessing the Ties, Harter Room and via Zoom
- 9:30 a.m. Confirmation Class, The Well
- 10:15 a.m. Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary
- 11:00 a.m. Hybrid Morning Worship, Sanctuary and via livestream
- 11:20 a.m. Church School: Creative Arts Workshop, MJH
- 12:15 p.m. GBIO Forum, MJH
- 7:30 p.m. Night Song, Sanctuary and via livestream

See our [Events Calendar](#) for Zoom links and details.

Sign up [here](#) to receive our weekly e-newsletter.

First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, UCC
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