

Christmastide
January 5, 2025

**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.

FIRST CHURCH
IN CAMBRIDGE
CONGREGATIONAL
389 YEARS
ON THE WAY
1 6 3 6 – 2 0 2 5

January 5, 2025

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Liturgist | Casey Marsh, <i>Deacon</i> |
| Preaching: | Mike Solberg, <i>Interim Senior Minister</i> |
| Leading Worship | Sarah Higginbotham, <i>Dir. of Communications & Christian Formation</i> Kate Layzer, <i>Minister of Street Outreach</i> Lee Prouty, <i>Facilities Manager</i> Peter Sykes, <i>Music Director</i> |
| Bulletin Cover Image | Christmas image by Perry Neubauer, <i>from the church archives</i> |

Today's Programs and Events

| | |
|------------|--|
| 10:15 a.m. | Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary |
| 11:00 a.m. | Hybrid Morning Worship, Sanctuary and via livestream |
| 11:20 a.m. | Church School: Pastoral Care Sunday, Library |
| 12:15 p.m. | Refreshments in Hastings Common |
| 12:20 p.m. | Pastoral Transition Work: Listening Session, Harter Room |
| 12:30 p.m. | Our Whole Lives (OWL) for 7/8th graders, The Well |
| 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 electronically by using the QR code in the bulletin or explore more options for giving at: www.firstchurchcambridge.org/give

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

For those worshipping via the livestream, we invite you to bring bread or crackers and water, juice, or wine to your home altar, so that you may participate in Holy Communion. All are welcome at the Table!

VOLUNTARY

Das alte Jahr vergangen ist

J. S. Bach

***HYMN 164**

Brightest and Best of the Stars of the Morning

***LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE**

Sarah Higginbotham

L: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light!

C: Glory streams from heaven afar! Alleluia!

L: The Daystar shines upon us!

C: The darkness cannot put it out!

L: The light of Christ!

C: Thanks be to God!

***PRAYER OF PRAISE**

L: Let us pray.

C: Praise to you, O God, for the light of Jesus!

L: Praise to you, O Christ, for the mystery of love,

C: the dawn of hope,

L: the gift of faith!

C: Praise to you, O God,

who finds us in the shadows of night

and shines through a human face to light our way. Amen.

WORDS OF WELCOME

Casey Marsh

ANTHEM

Quem Pastores Laudavere

Traditional Carol

CONFESSING

INVITATION TO CONFESSION AND SILENCE

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

L: Let us pray for healing, pardon and peace.

**C: Holy God, we confess that we move too quickly to the next thing,
busy with lists of things to do, places to go, and people to see.**

**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.*

We are done with the old year and ready for this new one.
On this twelfth day of Christmas, slow us down.
Let us linger in this Christmastide as we enter a New Year,
glad for the gift of Jesus, grateful for the simple pleasures of life,
and focused on how we treat ourselves and others.
Let these brightening days fill us with your love,
that we may see your world illuminated anew. Amen.

DECLARATION OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS

*GREETING OF PEACE

L: The peace of Christ be with you!
C: **And also with you!**

*HYMN 367

Break Not the Circle

A MUTUAL BLESSING

Adults: God be with you there.
Children: And God be with you here.

Children up through 6th grade are now invited to Church School: Pastoral Care Sunday in the Library. Children will return to worship in time for Communion.

OPENING THE WORD

PRAYER FOR UNDERSTANDING

READING

Ephesians 1:3-14

READING

John 1:1-9, 10-18

SERMON

Mike Solberg

*HYMN 129

Of Eternal Love Begotten

SHARING OUR LIFE TOGETHER

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Kate Layzer

INVITATION TO OFFERING

Our offering supports the many ministries of our church,
with 10% for missions in the community and beyond.
Please use our new [all-in-one link](#) for gifts from your
bank account or by credit/debit card:



***DOXOLOGY**

**To God, all glorious heavenly Light,
to Christ revealed in earthly night,
to God the Spirit now we raise
our joyful songs of thankful praise. Amen.**

PRAYER OF DEDICATION*SHARING THE FEAST*****INVITATION****PRAYER OF PREPARATION****REMEMBERING AND GIVING THANKS**

L: Now, O God, we remember Jesus, our brother.

Silence

L: He took his place among humanity, God-with-us, Emmanuel.

C: He was baptized with them, God's Child and Delight.

L: We remember that he called disciples and ministered to all.

C: He confounded the haughty and gave hope to the poor.

L: We remember that he died between thieves,
and was buried in a borrowed grave.

**C: We believe that you raised him. He lives even now,
the Light of the World.**

L: How wonderfully he fed us! Loaves and fish for the multitude,
wine for a wedding in Cana, living water for the woman at the well,
breakfast for disciples on the shore!

C: Even on the night of betrayal, he ate supper with his friends.

L: He took bread, gave you thanks, and broke it, saying:
This is my body, given for you!

**C: And when the supper was over, he took a cup filled with wine.
He gave you thanks for it and passed it to his friends, saying:
"This cup is the new relationship with God,
made possible because of me."**

L: He told us, "Drink this, all of you, to remember me!"

PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

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.**

*SHARING THE BREAD AND CUP

All who seek to follow Jesus' way of compassion, justice, and peace are welcome at this table. For those worshiping via the livestream, please take and eat. For those here in the Sanctuary, please come forward with your bulletins to receive the elements at one of the stations, and then proceed to the chancel to gather in a circle, making space to include the front pew in the circle for those who prefer to be seated.

*THANKSGIVING

L: Let us give thanks!

**All: We thank you, God, for gladness in this bread and cup,
for love that cannot die, for peace the world cannot give,
for joy in the company of friends, for the splendors of creation,
and for the mission of justice you have made our own.
Give us the gifts of this holy communion:
oneness of heart, love for neighbors,
forgiveness of enemies, the will to serve you every day,
and life that never ends.
In Christ's name we pray. Amen.**

GOING FORTH

*HYMN 414

This Is a Day of New Beginnings

see page 5

*BENEDICTION



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 Massachusetts, and to their close neighbors and relatives, the Nipmuc and Wampanoag peoples.

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

OPENING HYMN

164 Brightest and Best of the Stars of the Morning

1, 5. Bright - est and best of the stars of the morn - ing,
 2. Cold on his cra - dle the dew - drops are shin - ing,
 3. Shall we not of - fer our cost - ly de - vo - tion,
 4. Vain - ly we of - fer each am - ple ob - la - tion,

dawn on our path - way and lend us your aid.
 low lies his head with the beasts of the stall;
 fra - grance of E - dom and of - ferings di - vine,
 vain - ly with gifts heav'n - ly fa - vor se - cure;

Star of the east, the ho - ri - zon a - dorn - ing,
 an - gels a - dore him, in slum - ber re - clin - ing,
 gems of the moun - tain and pearls of the o - cean,
 rich - er by far is the heart's ad - o - ra - tion;

guide where our in - fant Re - deem - er is laid.
 Mak - er and Mon - arch and Sav - ior of all.
 myrrh from the for - est and gold from the mine?
 dear - er to God are the prayers of the poor. *(repeat stanza 1)*

WORDS: Reginald Heber, 1811, alt.
 MUSIC: Walker's *Southern Harmony*, 1835; harm. FCC, 1997

WALKER
 11 10.11 10

Break Not the Circle

367

Unison

1. Break not the cir - cle of en - a - bling love, where peo - ple
 2. Come, won - der at this love that comes to life, where words of
 3. Come, won - der at the Lord who came and comes to teach the
 4. Join then the move - ment of the love that frees, till peo - ple

grow, for - giv - en and for - giv - ing; break not that cir - cle, make it wid - er
 free - dom are with hu - mor spo - ken, and peo - ple keep no score of wrong and
 world the craft of hope - ful crav - ing for peace and whole - ness that will fill the
 of what - ev - er race or na - tion will tru - ly be them - selves, stand on their

still, till it in - cludes, em - brac - es all the liv - ing.
 guilt, but will that hu - man bonds re - main un - bro - ken.
 earth; he calls his peo - ple to cre - a - tive liv - ing.
 feet, see eye - to - eye with laugh - ter and e - la - tion.

WORDS: Fred Kaan, 1975
 MUSIC: Margaret R. Tucker, 1997

ROBERT
 10 11.10 11

SERMON HYMN

129

Of Eternal Love Begotten

Unison

1. Of e - ter - nal love be - got - ten, ere the worlds be -
 2. O ye heights of heaven sing prais - es; an - gel hosts sweet
 3. Christ, to thee with God Cre - a - tor, and O Ho - ly

gan to be, Christ is Al - pha and O - me - ga, he the
 an - thems sing! And on earth let all the faith - ful now their
 Ghost, to thee, hymn and chant and high thanks - giv - ing and un -

source, the end - ing he, of the things that are, that have been,
 joy - ous car - ols ring, ev - 'ry tongue Christ's name con - fess - ing,
 wea - ried prais - es be: hon - or, glo - ry, and do - min - ion,

and that fu - ture years shall see, ev - er - more and ev - er - more!
 count - less voic - es an - swer - ing, ev - er - more and ev - er - more!
 and e - ter - nal vic - to - ry, ev - er - more and ev - er - more!

WORDS: Aurelius Clemens Prudentius (4th century); sts. 1,3, tr. John Mason Neale, 1854, DIVINUM MYSTERIUM and Henry W. Baker, 1859, alt.; st. 2, tr. R. F. Davis, 1906, alt. 87.87.877

MUSIC: Plainsong, Mode V (13th century); harm. C. Winfred Douglas, *The Hymnal*, 1940

This Is a Day of New Beginnings

414

1. This is a day of new be - gin - nings,
 2. For by the life and death of Je - sus,
 3. Then let us, with the Spir - it's dar - ing,
 4. Christ is a - live, and goes be - fore us

time to re - mem - ber and move on,
 love's might - y Spir - it, now as then,
 step from the past and leave be - hind
 to show and share what love can do.

time to be - lieve what love is bring - ing,
 can make for us a world of dif - f'rence
 our dis - ap - point - ment, guilt and griev - ing,
 This is a day of new be - gin - nings -

lay - ing to rest the pain that's gone.
 as faith and hope are born a - gain.
 seek - ing new paths, and sure to find.
 our God is mak - ing all things new.

COMMUNITY PRAYERS

- We pray for Ami Brenner and her family as they mourn the loss of Ami's father Jim Rae, who died of cardiac arrest on December 28.
- We pray for Abby Shuman and her family as they mourn the passing of her uncle Barry, who died of brain cancer on December 29.
- We pray for Dave Kidder and his family as they experience yet another loss. Dave's younger sister Janet Kidder died on New Year's Day after a long struggle with Alzheimer's Disease. Her family was with her, in person and virtually, as she left this life.
- We pray for Karen Ann Zee, who is grieving the loss of her brother Timothy Lawrence Smith, Jr.
- We hold in our hearts Robb and Claire Morgan as they are living in hopeful anticipation of their "surprise" second baby, due in April.
- We pray for all who are living with significant health challenges and their families and caregivers: Ellen Frith, who is living with a serious chronic illness; Poppy Coffin, who is experiencing Alzheimer's Disease; Carter West, who is experiencing a chronic neurological disorder; and Keith Manville, who has atypical Parkinsonism. We also pray for those in treatment for cancer: Dana Hunt, Claire Morgan's mother; Ellen Smith, Devin Hansen's aunt; Judith Semmler, Alice Napoleon Jones's mother; Karen Anne Zee's daughter Becky Collet and her son-in-law Stewart Bailey; and Beth and Polly, Ann McCann's sisters.
- We pray for all those impacted by the violent act of terrorism in New Orleans on New Year's Eve. We mourn the loss of life and pray for healing for those who survived this traumatic experience.
- We pray for immigrants in the U.S. who are experiencing anxiety about their future safety, given the promise of the incoming administration of mass deportation.
- We pray for the wellbeing and safety of our trans and gender non-conforming siblings as they face the potential for even more restrictive and criminalizing national policies from the incoming administration.
- We pray for our neighbors all over the world. Especially we pray for all whose lives are affected by political upheaval in Syria and South Korea and by wars in Gaza and Israel, Ukraine, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Haiti, and Sudan. We pray for the dead, for their loved ones, and for their broader communities. We pray for changed hearts for all those inflicting violence upon others, and thus upon their own souls. We give thanks for the peacemakers. We pray that we, like they, may be free of the myth of redemptive violence, and take collective action, however small, to be people of true peace in this world.
- We continue to 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.
- 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.

TODAY AT FIRST CHURCH

Epiphany Art Exhibit

January 5-6, 2025, Margaret Jewett Hall

As we celebrate Epiphany at the start of a new year, First Church member and artist Henry Gates displays “I-THOU,” celebrating the spiritual relation of the individual with God through times of life transition and passage.



Pastoral Transition Work: Listening Sessions

Today, January 5 at 12:20 p.m., Harter Room

Sunday, January 12 at 10:00 a.m. & 12:20 p.m., Harter Room

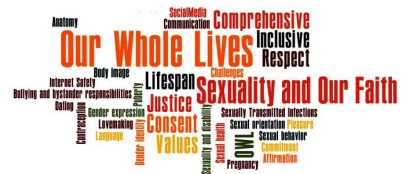
In order to set the stage for the work of the transitional Discovery Team, we are hosting listening sessions this month. The goal is to follow up on some themes and hopes from the last few years of our church life and do a “check in” about how the transitional time is going. Join us today after worship or

next Sunday, January 12 at 10:00 a.m. or 12:20 p.m. All sessions will be in the Harter Room, and should last about 45 minutes. Look for other Zoom session times to be announced soon. Please come, share your thoughts, and help set the stage for the transitional work ahead.

Our Whole Lives (OWL) for 7/8th graders

Today, 12:30 - 2:00 p.m., The Well

7th and 8th graders from First Church and Old South Church meet for a session of their year-long sexuality education curriculum.



Night Song

Today, 7:30 - 8:15 p.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.

[Learn more about Night Song.](#)

Do you want to follow the hyperlinks, but you're holding a paper bulletin in your hand?

Use your phone's camera to hover over the QR code marked “scan me;” this will take you to the Members & Friends page of our website, where you'll find the bulletin online, as well as links to news, events, and more.



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT FIRST CHURCH



Epiphany Potluck & Service - Monday, January 6

6:00 p.m. Potluck, MJH; 7:10 p.m. Service, Chapel to Sanctuary

Epiphany (“manifestation”) is a Christian feast so ancient that it predates Christmas. The meal is a potluck through and through: you are invited to bring either a main dish casserole (last names beginning with A-H), a salad or side dish (last names beginning with I-M), dessert (N-R), or drinks (S-Z). After our feast and a brief gathering ritual in the Chapel, we will set off together on a candlelight journey through the darkness until we arrive at the Sanctuary and circle it with light. Under the dome in the chancel, we will remember and renew our own baptismal promises, ending with a joyful “sprinkling” of all present. This event is for all ages, so gather up friends, neighbors, kids, and come share the light!

Sabbatical for First Church’s Director of Operations

Director of Operations Kirsten Manville is taking a well-earned sabbatical from January 1 to March 31. While she is away, other staff are generously pitching in to cover some of her tasks. For anything related to the building, sextons, and space use, please contact Facilities Manager [Lee Prouty](#). For anything regarding church administration, please contact Office Assistant [Bruce Dillenbeck](#). And for anything communications or worship related, please contact [Sarah Higginbotham](#), Director of Communications and Christian Formation. We wish Kirsten a restorative and restful sabbatical!



New Year, New Sunday Morning Schedule

As we begin this new year, we are shifting the order of our Sunday morning programs and rehearsals to a new (but really, an old) schedule. Longtime members will remember that our pre-worship formation used to take place in “the ten o’clock hour.” We would like to return to this structure, allowing for folks to attend formation programs directly before Morning Worship. As of January 5, our Sunday morning schedule will be:

- 9:15 a.m. Choir rehearsal**
- 10:00 a.m. Christian Formation program**
- 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship**

Formation programs at 10:00 will end by 10:45 to allow everyone to make a smooth and non-hurried transition into Morning Worship.

Young Adults: Faith on Tap

Tuesday, January 7, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m., Grendel’s Den, Harvard Square

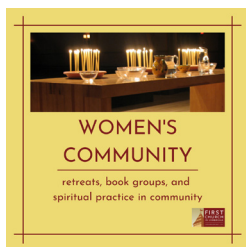
If you’re in your 20s-30s, and looking for a new friend, a place to explore faith with peers, or just a new favorite restaurant, come to our next Faith on Tap! RSVP for our early January get-together and get on the mailing list for all Young Adults events by emailing: youngadults@firstchurchcambridge.org



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT FIRST CHURCH

We Need Some Good Questions

In early 2025 we will focus our preaching on... well... questions. Specifically, questions that come from you! We want you to submit “big” questions about church / God / faith / Jesus / the Bible, etc., and we will respond in our preaching and worship. Maybe, “Is there a hell, and if so who’s in it?” Or, “I know we say science and faith aren’t really in conflict, but really, it is so?” Or, “How can I forgive _____?” All questions welcome. This is a good task for this pastoral interim time, as we begin to ask “Who are we?”, “What’s our core message?”, and “Where does God hope to lead us next?” Please email your questions to Pastor Mike at mike@firstchurchcambridge.org. Now send in those “big” questions!



Women's Community Book Group

Tuesday, January 14, 6:30 - 7:45 p.m., via Zoom *(please note the new start time)*

Join us for a lively discussion of Lynda Rutledge's [West with Giraffes: A Novel](#). “Part adventure, part historical saga, and part coming of age love story, this novel explores what it means to be changed by the grace of animals.” This will be a wonderful way to start the new year, and we hope all who identify as women in our church community will consider joining our gathering of friends and book lovers.

Register for a Winter Faith & Life Group

We are offering two Faith & Life groups this season, and you are welcome to register. Please contact the group leader to get on the list to receive the Zoom invitation to your group of choice. [Read the full descriptions of each group in the “Latest News” on our website.](#)



Exploring Hope for Peace and Justice in the Holy Land

Thursdays, January 9, 16, 23, and 30, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m., via Zoom

Since the vicious attacks in Israel on October 7, 2023, and the unprecedented humanitarian disaster caused by Israel's war in Gaza, along with increased crackdowns in the West Bank, how can Christians effectively engage in this issue? This group will have the opportunity to begin engagement through discussion with fellow congregants. To receive the Zoom invitation, please contact Adam Weiss at: adamw@startmail.com.

Four Centuries of First Church History

Sundays, February 2, 9, 16 & 23, 7:00 - 8:00 p.m., via Zoom

Delve into First Church's history over the centuries on Sunday evenings in February. Facilitated by Henry Gates, each session of this Faith & Life Group will include brief reflections by FCC folks who have particular knowledge of one of the four centuries through which First Church has existed as a community of faith. Email Henry Gates (hjgates@comcast.net) to register and receive the Zoom invitation.



THIS WEEK

Looking ahead to this week's programs and events



Monday, January 6

- 4:30 p.m. Contemplative Practices Gathering, via Zoom
- 6:00 p.m. Epiphany Potluck & Service, Margaret Jewett Hall

Tuesday, January 7

- 7:00 p.m. Young Adults: Faith on Tap, Grendel's Den, Harvard Square

Wednesday, January 8

- 9:30 a.m. Staff Meeting, Harter Room and via Zoom
- 3:00 p.m. Buildings & Grounds Committee, via Zoom
- 7:15 p.m. Deacons' Meeting, Harter Room

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

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

Thursday, January 9

- 6:30 p.m. Faith & Life Group: Exploring Hope for Peace & Justice in the Holy Land, via Zoom

Friday, January 10

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

Have a church program or event to promote? Complete the [First Church Communications Request form](#).

Sunday, January 12

- 9:15 a.m. Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary
- 10:00 a.m. Pastoral Transition Work: Listening Session, Harter Room
- 11:00 a.m. Hybrid Morning Worship, Sanctuary and via livestream
- 11:20 a.m. Church School: Godly Play and Bible 101 classes, Library and The Well
- 12:15 p.m. Refreshments in Hastings Common
- 12:20 p.m. Pastoral Transition Work: Listening Session, Harter Room
- 12:30 p.m. Our Whole Lives (OWL) for 7/8th graders, The Well
- 7:30 p.m. Night Song, Sanctuary and via livestream

First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, UCC
11 Garden St. • Cambridge, MA 02138

617-547-2724 • info@firstchurchcambridge.org • www.firstchurchcambridge.org

/firstchurchcambridge /FirstChurchInCambridge /c/FirstChurchInCambridge