



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 24, 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.

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

September 24, 2023

Preaching Today	Rev. Liz Walker
Liturgist	Phil LaFollette
Assisting in Worship	Ahmaad Edmund, <i>Pastoral Associate</i> Sarah Higginbotham, <i>Director of Creative Worship & Arts</i> Lee Prouty, <i>tech support</i> Dan Smith, <i>Senior Minister</i> Emma Thomas, <i>Ministerial Intern</i> Jennifer Velázquez, <i>guest musician</i>
Bulletin Cover Image	Psalm 117 collage by Audrey Bellinger <i>All Psalm collages can be viewed in a digital gallery on our website.</i>

Today's Programs and Events

9:30 a.m.	Adult Formation: Blessing the Ties, Harter Room and via Zoom
9:30 a.m.	Confirmation Class for 8/9th graders, 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.	Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO) Forum, MJH
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

Rejoice, The Lord Is King

Healey Willan

*HYMN 12

Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

*GREETING

Phil LaFollette

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

Phil LaFollette and Dan Smith

ANTHEM

Bwana Awabariki

Swahili hymn

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.*

TIME WITH CHILDREN

Sarah Higginbotham

Children up through 7th grade are now invited to Church School: Creative Arts Workshop in Margaret Jewett Hall. Caregivers can find the children in MJH after worship.

OPENING THE WORD

PRAYER FOR UNDERSTANDING

Emma Thomas

RESPONSIVE READING

Psalm 150

L: Alleluia! We praise you, God, in your sanctuary;
we praise you in your mighty skies!

**C: We praise you for your powerful deeds;
we praise you for your overwhelming glory!**

L: We praise you with the blast of the trumpet;
we praise you with lyre and harp!

**C: We praise you with timbrel and dance;
we praise you with strings and flute!**

L: We praise you with clashing cymbals;
we praise you with resounding cymbals!

C: Let everything that has breath praise God! Alleluia!

READING

John 20:19-23

SERMON

Catching Our Breath

Liz Walker

SHARING OUR LIFE TOGETHER

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ahmaad Edmund

PRAYERS FOR THE CHURCH AND WORLD

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

Amazing Grace

Traditional, arr. P. Sykes

*DOXOLOGY AND PRAYER OF DEDICATION

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.

GOING FORTH

*HYMN 235

Let It Breathe on Me

*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

How Fair And Pleasant Art Thou

Marcel Dupré

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.



SCAN ME

OPENING HYMN

12 Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

1. Im - mor - tal, in - vis - i - ble, God on - ly wise,
 2. Un - rest - ing, un - hast - ing, and si - lent as light,
 3. To all, life thou giv - est, to both great and small;
 4. Thou reign - est in glo - ry, thou dwell - est in light,

in light in - ac - ces - si - ble hid from our eyes,
 nor want - ing, nor wast - ing, thou rul - est in might;
 in all life thou liv - est, the true life of all;
 thine an - gels a - dore thee, all veil - ing their sight;

most bless - ed, most glo - rious, the An - cient of Days,
 thy jus - tice like moun - tains high soar - ing a - bove
 we blos - som and flour - ish as leaves on the tree,
 all praise we would ren - der; O help us to see

al - might - y, vic - to - rious, thy great name we praise.
 thy clouds which are foun - tains of good - ness and love.
 and with - er and per - ish, but naught chang - eth thee.
 'tis on - ly the splen - dor of light hid - eth thee.

WORDS: Walter Chalmers Smith, 1867, alt.
 MUSIC: Welsh melody from John Roberts' *Caniadau y Cyssegr*, 1839

ST. DENIO
 11.11.11

220

Breathe on Me, Breath of God

1. Breathe on me, Breath of God, fill me with life a - new
 2. Breathe on me, Breath of God, un - til my heart is pure,
 3. Breathe on me, Breath of God, till I am whol - ly thine,
 4. Breathe on me, Breath of God, so shall I nev - er die,

that I may love what thou dost love, and do what thou wouldst do.
 un - til with thee I will one will to do and to en - dure.
 un - til this earth - ly part of me glows with thy fire di - vine.
 but live with thee the per - fect life of thine e - ter - ni - ty.

WORDS: Edwin Hatch, 1886, alt.
 MUSIC: Robert Jackson, 1894

TRENTHAM
 SM

Let It Breathe on Me

235

1. Let it breathe on me, let it breathe on me, let the breath of the
 2. While I'm work - ing, God, in your vine - yard here, I can - not
 3. When the path - way, God, I can - not see, when the way is

Spir - it breathe on me. Let it breathe on me, let it
 serve with - out you near; O come, blessed Spir - it, so
 hard, O breathe on me; give me grace to know when

breathe on me, let the breath of God now breathe on me.
 close to me that I may feel you breathe on me.
 you are near, then, I pray, O Spir - it, breathe on me.

COMMUNITY PRAYERS

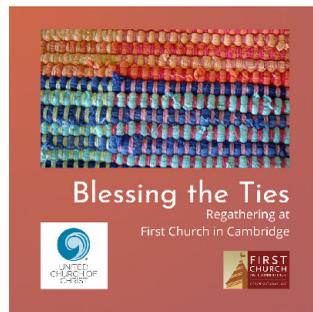
- We pray for Ken Ziebell and his family as they mourn the loss of his daughter Joan, who died following a long illness.
- We pray for Perry Neubauer as he continues with a lengthy recovery from shoulder surgery.
- We pray for Ami Brenner's father Jim Rae, who is in the ICU following another cancer treatment and a related blood clot.
- 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 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. We pray also for the people of Libya, where the death toll is over 4,000, with 9,000 missing after disastrous flooding.
- We pray for the town of Leominster, MA, and surrounding communities as they begin recovering from 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, political upheaval, and climate-related disaster. We pray for all refugees and migrants who make often life-threatening border crossings over land and open water.
- 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.
- 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

Blessing the Ties & Honoring our Ancestors at First Church & Beyond Today, 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! In today's second session, 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!



Confirmation Class for 8/9th Graders Today, 9:30 - 10:45 a.m., The Well

Our new group of Confirmands begin their journey with a first session entitled "Faith and Belief."

Guest Preacher Rev. Liz Walker

Today at 11:00 a.m., Sanctuary and [via livestream](#)

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 Today, 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!

REGATHERING SEASON AT FIRST CHURCH

Meet Ministerial Intern Emma Thomas

Emma is a third year Master of Divinity student at Harvard Divinity School who grew up just across the river in Jamaica Plain. She is an educator, facilitator, and doula with a passion for ancestral healing, transformative justice, rites of passage, and spiritual support for full-spectrum reproductive care. Her heart is most alive in groups of people building transformative and joyful relationships to deepen together, shift systems, and remember our interdependence with all of life. She loves to read poetry, dance and move with others, be outside, sing, play board games, and much of her free time is spent walking or adventuring with her goldendoodle puppy Ollie. The process of re-mem-bering guides her life in ministry: remembering our inherent belovedness, remembering our interdependence with all beings and with the Earth, and re-mem-bering in the embodied sense of belonging ourselves as the body of Christ in the world.



WELCOME CORPS

Are you a lawyer?
Are you active on Social Media?

Do you enjoy training people on tech, or about budgeting and banking?

Then we especially need your help to welcome refugees! [First Church & Friends' Welcome Corps effort](#) is preparing to welcome two refugees from Sub-Saharan Africa in coming weeks. These newcomers will have Official Refugee Status and full access to government benefits. Our team will support them in a minimum 90-day resettlement effort. We are asking for volunteers with these specific backgrounds to support our refugee effort in these areas. ***We also need housing for the refugees for 2- 3 months*** - so if you have any room in your home, or know of anyone else who does – please let us know! If you can join us in our effort with time or housing, [complete this form as a first step](#). And reach out to your friends and community with this experience; people outside of First Church are very welcome to join the team! If you have any questions about being a volunteer, please email Martha Mueller Cook at: marthamuellercook@gmail.com.

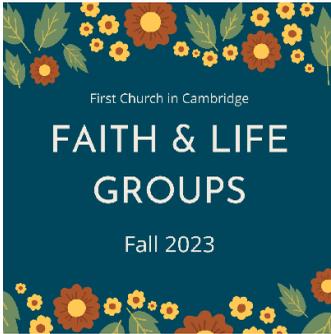
Reflective Conversations with Brent Coffin

Tuesdays, 7:15 - 8:45 a.m., beginning September 26, [via Zoom](#)

Brent Coffin leads as we share in weekly reflection about biblical and contemporary texts, bringing 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. Questions? Please contact Brent at: brentbcoffin@gmail.com.



REGATHERING SEASON AT FIRST CHURCH



Register for Fall Faith & Life Groups

Led by First Church members, Faith & Life Groups are designed to encourage meaningful connections through shared interests. Faith & Life Groups involve making a short-term commitment (a single session to several weeks, depending on the group) to something that might be delightful, deep, or even transformational. If you are looking for a way to dip your toes into the life of our church and stay connected outside of Sunday Worship, this is for you!

[Read full descriptions and register here.](#)

- **Becoming a Trans- and Nonbinary-Affirming Church** with Lisa McCarty and Dan Smith
- **Living and Celebrating the Spirituality of the Seasons** with Lee Andrews
- **Creating a Spiritual Autobiography** with Stephen Opie
- **Holiday Art Workshop: Art for God** with Henry Gates

Food Pantry Donations on Communion Sundays

Holding Hilary Hopkins in our hearts, First Church continues to provide contributions to the Many Helping Hands Food Pantry. The volunteer-run, donation-driven pantry offers a grocery shopping experience on the second Saturday of each month. You are invited to donate healthy snacks, hygiene products, spices, and (when possible) items bought in bulk/case, as this supports customers having a similar shopping experience. **First Church donations can be left in the large baskets in the Narthex on the first Sunday of each month, which is next Sunday, October 1.**



2023 SNEUCC Justice Summit: Trans and Nonbinary Belonging in the Church Online Registration Extended to October 4

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. This full-day event includes worship and preaching, workshops, relationship-building and connection. **As part of a conference-wide initiative on Trans and Nonbinary Affirming Churches, First Church in Cambridge has eight spots reserved at the conference.** Online registration has been extended to October 4. Using [this registration link](#), select the "scholarship" option and indicate your connection to First Church in Cambridge.

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.

REGATHERING SEASON AT FIRST CHURCH



Blessing of the Animals Service

Sunday, October 8 at 11:00 a.m., Sanctuary and via livestream

On this Sunday close to St. Francis' Day, we invite you and your beloved animal companions to join us for a special Blessing of the Animals as part of Morning Worship. This will be a moment of gratitude for all the gifts our pets give us and a celebration of all God's creatures and creation! All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small are welcome! Pets are welcome on leash or in crates; if it's easier on you and/or your pet, you may also bring a photo to be blessed and send one to Bruce Dillenbeck by Wednesday, October 4, at bruce@firstchurchcambridge.org for inclusion in our "All God's Critters" slideshow.

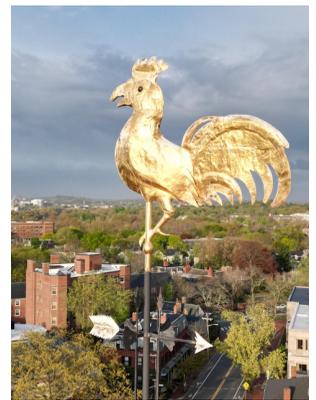
We will also take a special moment to bless and give thanks for the cockerel that has topped our tower for over 150 years and that is coming down in early October to protect it from further damage.

Listening Session on the First Church Cockerel Weathervane

Sunday, October 8, 12:30 - 1:30 p.m., Harter Room and via Zoom

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.

Join us for this first listening session, when the First Church community will have 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. [Read more and find links to drone videos on our website.](#)



SCAN ME

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.

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

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 25

- 4:30 p.m. Contemplative Practices Gathering, via Zoom
- 7:00 p.m. Executive Council, via Zoom

Tuesday, September 26

- 7:15 a.m. Reflective Conversations with Brent Coffin, via Zoom
- 10:30 a.m. Communications Team Meeting, Harter Room

Wednesday, September 27

- 9:30 a.m. Staff Meeting, Harter Room and via Zoom

Thursday, September 28

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

Friday, September 29

- 12:00 p.m. Friday Café, Margaret Jewett Hall (MJH)
- 7:00 p.m. All-Church Retreat begins at Craigville Retreat Center

Saturday, September 30

All-Church Retreat at Craigville Retreat Center

Sunday, October 1

- 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, MJH
- 12:15 p.m. Refreshments in MJH
- 1:00 p.m. All-Church Retreat ends at Craigville Retreat Center
- 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
11 Garden St. • Cambridge, MA 02138

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

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