



*Freddie Funck*

Regathering Season  
September 14, 2025



# 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.

## Order of Worship

### GATHERING

**VOLUNTARY**

Allegro

Niels Gade

**\*HYMN 3**

God of Abraham and Sarah

**\*GREETING**

Noël Grisanti

- L: Beloved of God, come gather in!  
Together, let us grow closer to God.
- C: We enter now with all that we are, our stories,  
our hopes, our yearnings, our fears.**
- L: God embraces all of it- all of you!
- C: Thanks be to God for that!**
- L: Siblings in the Spirit, God's heart is open,  
and God's invitation is deep and wide.
- C: No matter where our journey has taken us in the past,  
we now begin anew to grow closer to God. Alleluia!**

### WORDS OF WELCOME

**ANTHEM**

When Israel Was in Egypt's Land

Spiritual  
arr. Andrew Henderson

### CONFESSING

### INVITATION TO CONFESSION

**SUNG PRAYER**



**SILENCE**



## PRAYER OF CONFESSION

L: Let us pray:

**C: Most merciful God, we confess that we have built golden calves, in different forms and by different names: wealth beyond reasonable need; security beyond reasonable safety; consumption that defaces your creation; life priorities that lead us away from you. Forgive us, Holy One. Heal us from this madness. Help us grow closer to you. Amen.**

## DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

### \*GREETING OF PEACE

L: The peace of Christ be with you!

**C: And also with you!**

### \*HYMN 15

All Praise to You, Creator God

### \*MUTUAL BLESSING

**Adults: May God be with you there.**

**Children: And may God be with you here.**

*Children up through 7th grade are now invited to Church School classes. Godly Play (PreK-3rd grade), Middler (4/5th 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

L: Let us pray.

**C: Come, Holy Spirit, and speak to us now.  
Open our minds to receive your wisdom;  
open our hearts to receive your truth;  
open our bodies to receive your hope;  
Draw us nearer to you by your word of grace and truth. Amen.**

### READING

Exodus 32:7-14

*\*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 244**

Like a Tree Beside the Waters

**\*THE FIRST CHURCH COVENANT**

*Sadly, the original membership covenant of our congregation is lost to history. It was likely very similar to this covenant, originally from 1630, created by the church in Charlestown and adopted by our congregation in 1872.*

**C: We who are now brought together and united into one Church  
under the Lord Jesus Christ, our Head,  
in such sort as becometh all those whom  
He hath redeemed and sanctified to himself,  
do solemnly and religiously, as in His most holy presence,  
promise and bind ourselves to walk in all our ways  
according to the rule of the Gospel,  
and in all sincere conformity to His holy ordinances,  
and in mutual love and respect each to other,  
so near as God shall give us grace.**

**SHARING OUR LIFE TOGETHER**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Kate Layzer

**CALL TO SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING**

Laurie Friedman

**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

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:



## OFFERTORY

O, for a Closer Walk With Thee

C. V. Stanford

## \*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 352

Go Forth for God

## \*BENEDICTION

## VOLUNTARY

Allegretto

Niels Gade

---

## Today's Worship Leaders

Laurie Friedman  
Noël Grisanti  
Kate Layzer  
Lee Prouty  
Mike Solberg  
Peter Sykes

*Clerk  
Pastoral Intern Liturgist  
Minister of Street Outreach  
Facilities Manager  
Interim Senior Minister  
Music Director*

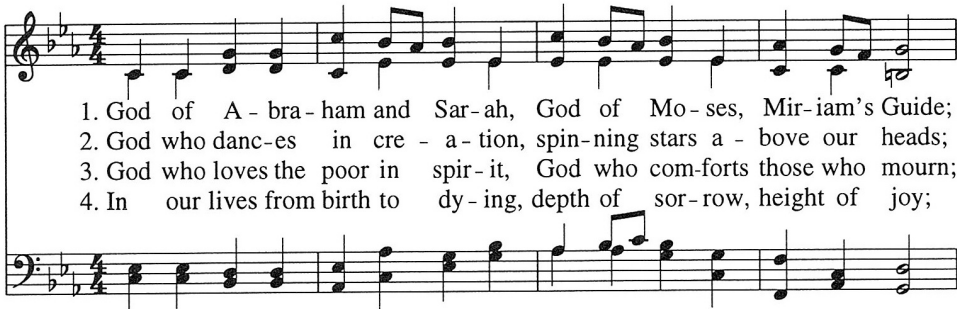
## New to First Church?

Consider filling out a **welcome card** ([online](#) or on the small clipboards) to get connected.

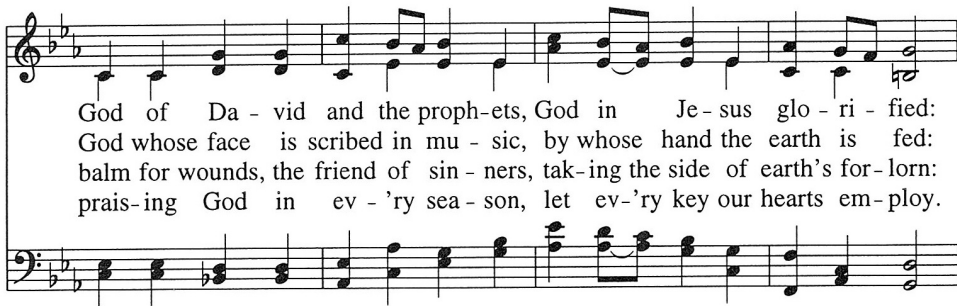
# OPENING HYMN

## God of Abraham and Sarah

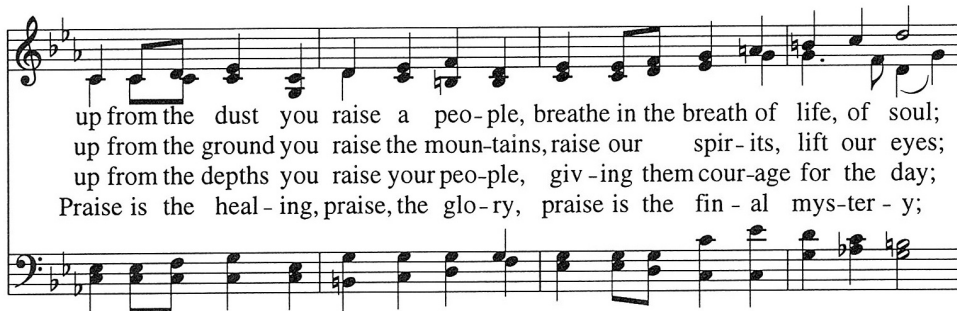
3



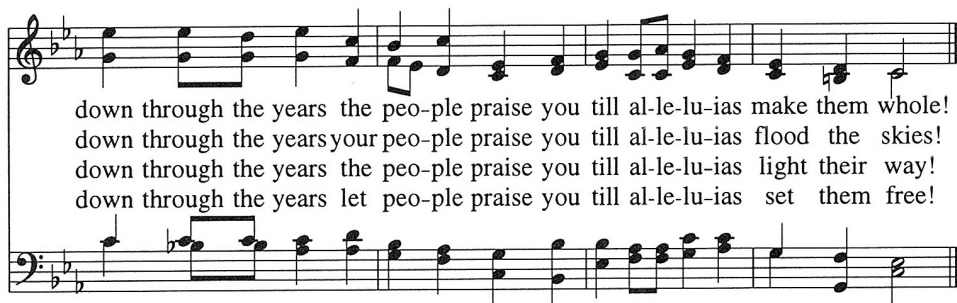
1. God of A - bra - ham and Sar - ah, God of Mo - ses, Mir - iam's Guide;  
 2. God who danc - es in cre - a - tion, spin - ning stars a - bove our heads;  
 3. God who loves the poor in spir - it, God who com - forts those who mourn;  
 4. In our lives from birth to dy - ing, depth of sor - row, height of joy;



God of Da - vid and the proph - ets, God in Je - sus glo - ri - fied:  
 God whose face is scribed in mu - sic, by whose hand the earth is fed:  
 balm for wounds, the friend of sin - ners, tak - ing the side of earth's for - lorn:  
 prais - ing God in ev - 'ry sea - son, let ev - 'ry key our hearts em - ploy.



up from the dust you raise a peo - ple, breathe in the breath of life, of soul;  
 up from the ground you raise the moun - tains, raise our spir - its, lift our eyes;  
 up from the depths you raise your peo - ple, giv - ing them cour - age for the day;  
 Praise is the heal - ing, praise, the glo - ry, praise is the fin - al mys - ter - y;



down through the years the peo - ple praise you till al - le - lu - ias make them whole!  
 down through the years your peo - ple praise you till al - le - lu - ias flood the skies!  
 down through the years the peo - ple praise you till al - le - lu - ias light their way!  
 down through the years let peo - ple praise you till al - le - lu - ias set them free!

WORDS: James Gertmenian, alt., © 1986  
 MUSIC: Melody, James Gertmenian, © 1986; harm. Ronald Huntington, alt., © 1986

CONSTANTINE  
 87.87D



## All Praise to You, Creator God

15

*May be sung as a round*

① F C7  
All praise to you, Cre - a - tor God,

② F C F  
for all your bless - ings giv'n with love; for friends and food,

C7 F C7 F  
for life re - newed, we give you thanks, O God.

WORDS and MUSIC: Margery Maple, 1993


The 'ADM' of the tune name refers to the  
Association of Disciple Musicians.

ADM BLESSING  
88.86


© 1995 Chalice Press

244


# Like a Tree Beside the Waters




1. Like a tree be-side the wa-ters, nur-tured by your lov - ing care,  
 2. Like a tree be-side the riv - er, draw-ing life from ho - ly streams,  
 3. We, be-side the liv-ing wa-ters, drink from your e - ter - nal life.



we, O God, your sons and daugh-ters, your en-dur-ing wit - ness bear.  
 fill us with your love for - ev - er; re - cre - ate our hopes and dreams.  
 Give to all, your sons and daugh-ters, faith that ris-es o - ver strife.



In each pass - ing gen - er - a - tion may your voice of love be heard.  
 Through the storms of life sus-tain us by the wis-dom of your grace.  
 Ev - er - liv - ing God, most glo-rious, strength-en us for life to - day.



Bless, we pray, this con-gre-ga - tion with your ho - ly, liv - ing Word.  
 May the chang-ing of the sea-sons find us in your warm em-brace.  
 By the hope of time-less prom-ise guide your church up - on the Way.

WORDS: James F. D. Martin, 1992, alt.  
 MUSIC: Roy Hopp, 1989, adapt.

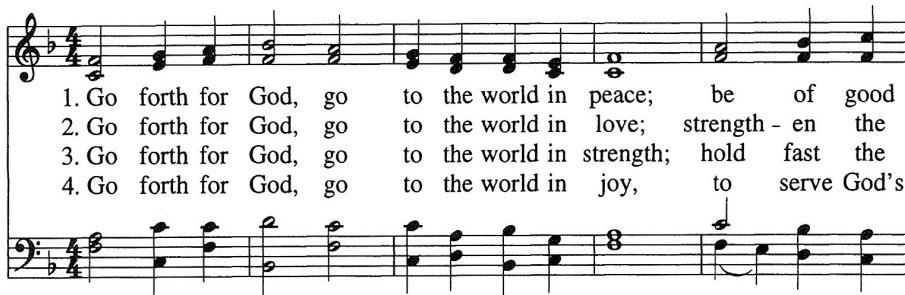
SILVER CREEK  
 87.87D



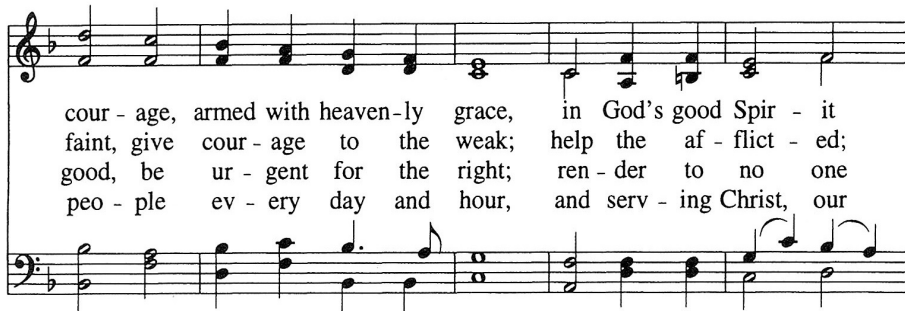
# CLOSING HYMN

## Go Forth for God

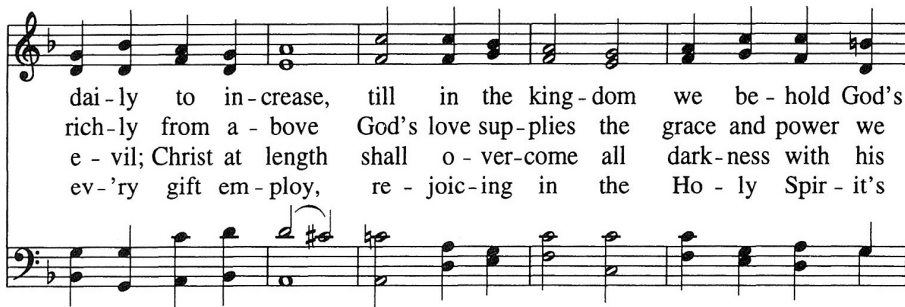
352



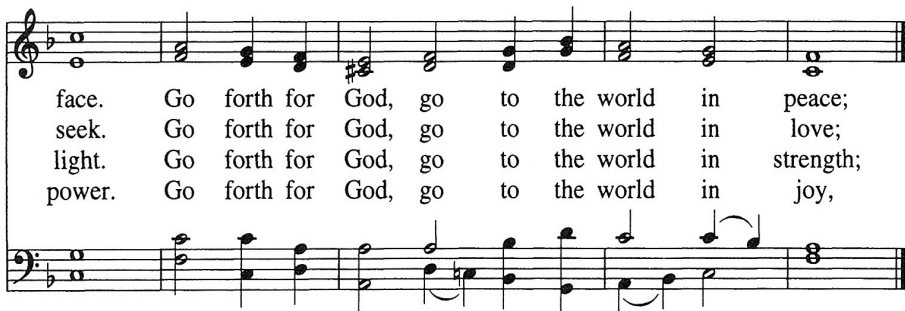
1. Go forth for God, go to the world in peace; be of good  
 2. Go forth for God, go to the world in love; strength - en the  
 3. Go forth for God, go to the world in strength; hold fast the  
 4. Go forth for God, go to the world in joy, to serve God's



cour - age, armed with heaven-ly grace, in God's good Spir - it  
 faint, give cour - age to the weak; help the af - flict - ed;  
 good, be ur - gent for the right; ren - der to no one  
 peo - ple ev - ery day and hour, and serv - ing Christ, our



dai - ly to in - crease, till in the king - dom we be - hold God's  
 rich - ly from a - bove God's love sup - plies the grace and power we  
 e - vil; Christ at length shall o - ver - come all dark - ness with his  
 ev - 'ry gift em - ploy, re - joic - ing in the Ho - ly Spir - it's



face. Go forth for God, go to the world in peace;  
 seek. Go forth for God, go to the world in love;  
 light. Go forth for God, go to the world in strength;  
 power. Go forth for God, go to the world in joy,

WORDS: John Raphael Peacey, 1975  
 MUSIC: *Trente quatre Pseaumes de David*, Geneva, 1551

OLD 124th  
 10 10.10 10.10

-hymn insert 4-

## COMMUNITY PRAYERS

- We pray for the family of Todd McCreight, a former First Church member (and Moderator) who died on September 4 in Rockville, MD, after suffering through Lewy Body Dementia in recent years. We pray especially for his wife Cathie Lutter, son Jeffrey, and daughter Anna.
- We pray for Jeff Morgan, Gaylen Morgan's brother, who is extremely ill with cancer and suffering significant pain of both body and spirit.
- We pray for all who are living with significant health challenges and their families and caregivers: Poppy Coffin, who is experiencing Alzheimer's Disease; Carter West, who is experiencing a chronic neurological disorder; Katy Bauer, Sunnessa Schettler's mother, who is experiencing COPD; and Keith Manville, Kirsten's father, who has atypical Parkinsonism. We also pray for those in treatment for cancer: Mary Martha Thiel, Betsy Opitz; Tim Schoenfield, Henry's brother; Louise Higginbotham, Sarah's mother; 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 the moral courage of our political leaders, in particular in the places where Immigration and Custom Enforcement agents are intensifying their unlawful campaigns of detention, disappearance, and deportation, including Chicago and here in Massachusetts. We pray for all who are living in an increased state of terror due to these actions, and that all of us may have the strength to take action and to bear witness to our neighbors in need.
- We lift up the Harvard University community, including people from our congregation, in the midst of a confrontation with the federal government over academic independence and freedom of speech.
- We pray for all those touched by the assassination of Charlie Kirk, and lament the political environment in which such a killing has occurred. In the name of Jesus Christ, we condemn all violence, politically motivated and otherwise, whether exercised by those in power or those seeking to resist such power. May the love and justice of Jesus guide us all in this time.
- We continue to celebrate the dignity and worth of our trans and gender non-conforming siblings who are experiencing an onslaught of prejudicial discrimination condoned by the current administration. We affirm that all of us are beloved in the eyes of God, just as we are.
- We pray for people around the world trapped in cycles of violence, especially all the innocent victims of the deadly power games of political rulers: in the Middle East, including in Gaza, where the lack of safe access to food is causing mass starvation; in Ukraine; in Haiti; and in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- We continue to pray for our earth and for all creation in the face of the climate crisis.
- We pray for all those giving and receiving care, compassion, and needed services from First Church's homeless ministries, both in the First Church Shelter and at the Friday Café. We continue to pray and work for a just society where housing is recognized as a human right.

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

## TODAY AT FIRST CHURCH

### “Multigen @ 10”

#### Christian Formation for All Ages

**Today, 10:00 - 10:45 a.m., Margaret Jewett Hall**

This Regathering season, we’re experimenting with a new “rotation model” of formation programs in the 10 O’Clock Hour. Today, it’s multigenerational formation! Come, one and all, to this experiential formation hour for all ages. Sarah Higginbotham will help us connect with folks we may only know by face through games, songs, and activities that allow us to share more deeply with each other.



#### Newcomers Gathering

**Sunday, September 14, 12:15 - 1:15 p.m.**

#### Harter Room

Feeling new here at First Church? Thinking about becoming a member? Either way, come join us for a newcomers’ gathering after worship on September 14. Come meet other folks who are new, connect with staff and a few members of the church, learn a bit more about membership, and ask any questions you might have. We’ll even provide lunch! We’ll meet up in the Harter Room after the service (just ask anyone for the location).

### Last Call to Register for the All-Church Fall Retreat!

**Friday, September 26 - Sunday, September 28**

The retreat is an amazing opportunity to spend time with our multigenerational church community in a glorious location on the Cape at Craigville Retreat Center! Join Sarah Higginbotham, Noël Grisanti, and other church leaders for a weekend of community-building in fellowship, formation, and fun.

[Register here!](#) ***TODAY is the last day to register!***



#### Night Song

**Sunday evenings, 7:30 - 8:15 p.m., Sanctuary and [via livestream](#)**

A worship opportunity that offers stillness and sublime music in a darkened sanctuary for respite and reset, Night Song is a hybrid offering of First Church for in-person attendance in the Sanctuary and viewing via livestream or listening at another time on the Night Song YouTube channel. [Learn more about Night Song.](#)

## REGATHERING SEASON AT FIRST CHURCH

### Growing Closer to God: Regathering Season 2025

The Discovery Team wrote in their comprehensive report last spring that First Church *“stands at a tender and transformative moment in its life together. This time of transition invites us to reflect deeply on who we are, what we value, and where we feel called to go as a community of faith.”*

The report highlights that many within our congregation are seeking more spiritual grounding and growth, especially to support us as we live out our values of social justice and anti-racism. And, at the same time, people are not sure exactly what spiritual grounding and growth might look like!

With that in mind, this fall we will center our regathering around a question:

***What does it mean to grow closer to God, as individuals and as a church community?*** We'll be exploring a range of possible responses to this question, both from an individual and a communal perspective, and also simply affirming that this is a good discussion to have! Join us in worship, small groups, Bible study, and multigenerational formation as we practice our faith together.



### Faith & Life Groups: Fall 2025 - Call for Leaders!

Are you interested in leading a small group over Zoom or in person this Fall? Contact Beth Spaulding ([bspaulding68@gmail.com](mailto:bspaulding68@gmail.com)) to discuss your idea for the next round of Faith & Life Groups, running in October/November, with registration happening in September. 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.). ***Pitch your idea for a Faith & Life Group to Beth by Monday, September 22.***

### Register for Church School 2025-26

Church School classes begin today, but registrations are welcome at any time. We offer a variety of opportunities for children and youth, including age-based classes, creative arts and pastoral care workshops, child care for little ones, and youth group activities for teens. All children from infants through high school seniors are welcome in the Church School! Registering your children helps us to prepare for them, but drop-ins are always welcome. Please complete [this registration form](#) to let us know a bit about your children.





## REGATHERING SEASON AT FIRST CHURCH



### Family Night

**Tuesday, September 16, 6:00 - 7:00 p.m., Sage Hall**

We provide pasta and red sauce, you bring a side dish or dessert to share. All are welcome, especially children with their parents and caregivers. Please let Meredith know how many are coming by emailing: [familynight@firstchurchcambridge.org](mailto:familynight@firstchurchcambridge.org). No RSVP is too late! We'll eat in Sage Hall (our basement playspace) so that kids can play freely after dinner. And save the dates for our other

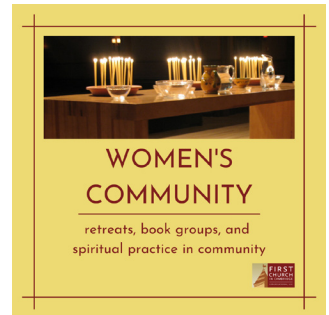
fall Family Nights: September 30, October 14 & 28, November 18, and December 9.

### Women's Community Book Group

**Tuesday, September 16, 6:30-7:45 p.m., via Zoom**

All those who identify as women are invited to join us for our opening book discussion on Liz Walker's [\*No One Left Alone: A Story of How Community Helps Us Heal\*](#).

This is a piece of non-fiction written by the first Black woman to anchor a major Boston TV station, who then went on to seek ordination. Rev. Liz served the community of Roxbury Presbyterian Church, where she developed amazing programs to support and heal her community. We hope this will be the start of another year of community building among women at First Church; please encourage your friends to give this a try. For questions or to receive the zoom link, contact Alex Steinert-Evoy: [alex@steinert-evoy.org](mailto:alex@steinert-evoy.org)



### Thinking About Joining the Church?

**Thursdays, September 18 & 25, 7:00 - 8:00 p.m., via Zoom**

For those interested in church membership, join Pastor Mike via Zoom on two upcoming Thursday evenings (attend both, if possible). Then we'll welcome new members in worship on Sunday, October 5. See/contact Pastor Mike ([mike@firstchurchcambridge.org](mailto:mike@firstchurchcambridge.org)) with any questions. And welcome!

### In Memoriam

A celebration of the life of **Joan Whitaker** will take place this coming Saturday, September 20, at 11:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary and via livestream, with a reception to follow in Margaret Jewett Hall. Joan was a founder and 30-year staff member of the First Church Shelter; she was a beloved member of the Shelter community.



## REGATHERING SEASON AT FIRST CHURCH

### Young Adults: Coffee Corner

**Sunday, September 21, 9:45 - 10:45 a.m.**

**Pavement Coffee, Harvard Smith Center**

Join our Young Adults group (20s and 30s) for an informal coffee and chat in Harvard Square before 11:00 a.m. Worship. You are welcome if you feel new or if you have been here a while and want to catch up over a morning drink and bagel. Please RSVP so we know to expect you!

To learn about upcoming events, email:  
[youngadults@firstchurchcambridge.org](mailto:youngadults@firstchurchcambridge.org)



### Aging with Grace Monthly Meeting

**Tuesday, September 23, 3:00 - 4:15 p.m., via Zoom**

Join us for our monthly Aging with Grace conversation, where we connect on the joys and challenges of aging.

For more information about our reading and to receive the Zoom invitation, please contact:

Linda Ziebell ([lindaziebell@comcast.net](mailto:lindaziebell@comcast.net)) or

Martha Mueller Cook ([marthamuellercook@gmail.com](mailto:marthamuellercook@gmail.com)).

### Community Resistance Gathering

**Sunday, October 5, 12:30 - 1:30 p.m.**

**Margaret Jewett Hall**

First Church is offering a space for resisting! Join with First Church folks and friends as we connect to the growing national movement of non-cooperation with our government's authoritarian efforts. We'll recap our August gathering, continue deepening our community connections, and identify ways to be in relationship to the network of actions and organizations that are "being the change" in the greater Cambridge area.



Looking for ways to find out about local opportunities for action?  
Check out our [Community Resistance Resources](#).



## REGATHERING SEASON AT FIRST CHURCH



### **Special Congregational Meeting and Luncheon Sunday, September 21, 12:30 - 1:30 p.m. Margaret Jewett Hall and via Zoom**

Drawing on the work begun by the Assets Group three years ago, the Parsonage Working Group has spent many months exploring the best ways to utilize the asset of the 44 Garden Street property and ensure long-term housing support for our lead minister. We have now reached the point in our discernment process for the congregation to vote on a plan of action. Please join us for this important meeting, where First Church members will be asked to make their voice heard through our democratic meeting process. Lunch and child care will be provided. All are welcome!



***We invite volunteers to help with hall setup, light meal prep, clean-up, and bringing a sweet treat or fruit for the September 21 luncheon.  
[Sign up here.](#)***

---

### **Call to Special Congregational Meeting**

Notice is hereby given that  
a Special Congregational Meeting of  
First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, United Church of Christ,  
will be held in its 390th year at 12:30 p.m.,  
Sunday the 21st of September 2025,  
in person in Margaret Jewett Hall and via Zoom conference  
for the following purposes:

1. To approve the minutes of the June 22nd Congregational meeting
2. To vote on the recommendations from the Executive Council to pursue the sale of the parsonage at 44 Garden Street, with proceeds to be used to purchase a new property to serve as ministerial housing.

No other business may legally come before the meeting.

By direction of the Executive Council,

Laurie Friedman, Clerk  
Cambridge, Massachusetts  
August 26, 2025



# CALENDAR

## Today's Events

- 9:15 a.m. Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary  
10:00 a.m. "Multigen @ 10" Christian Formation for all ages  
11:00 a.m. Morning Worship, Sanctuary and via livestream  
11:20 a.m. Church School: Godly Play, Middler, and Bible 101 classes  
12:15 p.m. Refreshments in Margaret Jewett Hall (MJH)  
12:30 p.m. Newcomers Gathering, Harter Room  
12:30 p.m. Godly Play Teacher Orientation, Library  
7:30 p.m. Night Song, Sanctuary and via livestream

## The Week Ahead

### Monday, September 15

- 4:30 p.m. Contemplative Practices Gathering, via Zoom

### Tuesday, September 16

- 6:00 p.m. Family Night, Sage Hall  
6:30 p.m. Women's Community Book Group, via Zoom  
7:30 p.m. Shelter Oversight Committee, via Zoom

### Wednesday, September 17

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

### Thursday, September 18

- 7:00 p.m. Thinking About Joining the Church?, via Zoom

### Friday, September 19

- 12:00 p.m. Friday Café, MJH

### Saturday, September 20

- 11:00 a.m. Memorial Service for Joan Whitaker, Sanctuary and via livestream

### Sunday, September 21

- 9:00 a.m. Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary  
9:45 a.m. Young Adults: Coffee Corner, Pavement Coffee, Harvard Square  
10:00 a.m. Formation Hour: Bible Study, Harter Room and via Zoom  
11:00 a.m. Morning Worship, Sanctuary and via livestream  
11:20 a.m. Church School Classes for PreK-7th grade  
12:30 p.m. Special Congregational Meeting and Luncheon, MJH  
7:30 p.m. Night Song, Sanctuary and via livestream

FIRST CHURCH  
IN CAMBRIDGE  
CONGREGATIONAL

**389 YEARS**  
ON THE WAY  
1636 – 2025



*scan for online bulletin*

Visit [firstchurchcambridge.org](https://firstchurchcambridge.org) to:

- Read all the [latest news](#).
- See our [events calendar](#) for Zoom links and details.
- Find transcripts and recordings of [sermons](#).
- Complete a [First Church Communications Request Form](#) to promote a church event.