



Freddie Funck

Regathering Season
September 21, 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

C.P.E. Bach

***HYMN 469**

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

***GREETING**

George Van Hare

- 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

My Lord, What A Morning

Spiritual

CONFESSING

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

SUNG PRAYER



SILENCE



Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts,

Search me for a - ny hurt - ful way, lead me in the way ev - er - last - ing.

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

We will sing the hymn through once together, then sing it as a two-part round; follow Sarah!

*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.**

**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.*

READING

Luke 16:1-13

SERMON

Personal, Curious, Generous, & Socially Engaged

Mike Solberg

*HYMN 472

I Would Be True

*THE FIRST CHURCH COVENANT

This covenant, originally from 1630, was 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

Karen McArthur

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

Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee

Chant, arr. Arlen Clarke

*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 373

We Are Your People

*BENEDICTION

VOLUNTARY

Allegretto

C.P.E. Bach

Today's Worship Leaders

Karen McArthur
Lee Prouty
Mike Solberg
Peter Sykes
George Van Hare

*Minister of Stewardship & Finance
Facilities Manager
Interim Senior Minister
Music Director
Liturgist*

New to First Church?

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

*The flowers on the chancel were donated by the Shelter Oversight Committee
in honor of First Church Shelter Matriarch Joan Whitaker,
whose life was celebrated here yesterday.*

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

469

1. A might-y for - tress is our God, a bul-wark nev - er fail - ing;
 2. Did we in our own strength con - fide, our striv-ing would be los - ing,
 3. And though this world, with dev - ils filled, should threat-en to un - do us,
 4. That word a - bove all earth - ly powers, no thanks to them, a - bid - eth;

our help-er strong a - mid the flood of mor - tal ills pre - vail - ing.
 were not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choos - ing.
 we will not fear, for God hath willed the truth to tri - umph through us.
 the Spir-it and the gifts are ours through Christ who with us sid - eth.

For still our an-cient foe doth seek to work us woe; with craft and pow - er
 Dost ask who that may be? Christ Je - sus, it is he; Lord Sab - a - oth his
 The powers of e - vil grim, we trem-ble not for them; their rage we can en -
 Let goods and kin-dred go, this mor-tal life al - so; the bod - y they may

great, and armed with cru - el hate, on earth is not an e - qual.
 name. From age to age the same, and he must win the bat - tle.
 dure, for lo, their doom is sure: one lit - tle word shall fell them.
 kill; God's truth a - bid-eth still, God's king - dom is for - ev - er.

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

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472

I Would Be True

1. I would be true, for there are those who trust me;
 2. I would be friend of all—the foe, the friend - less;

I would be pure, for there are those who care;
 I would be giv - ing, and for - get the gift;

I would be strong, for there is much to suf - fer;
 I would be hum - ble, for I know my weak - ness;

I would be brave, for there is much to dare,
 I would look up, and laugh, and love, and lift,

I would be brave, for there is much to dare.
 I would look up, and laugh, and love, and lift.

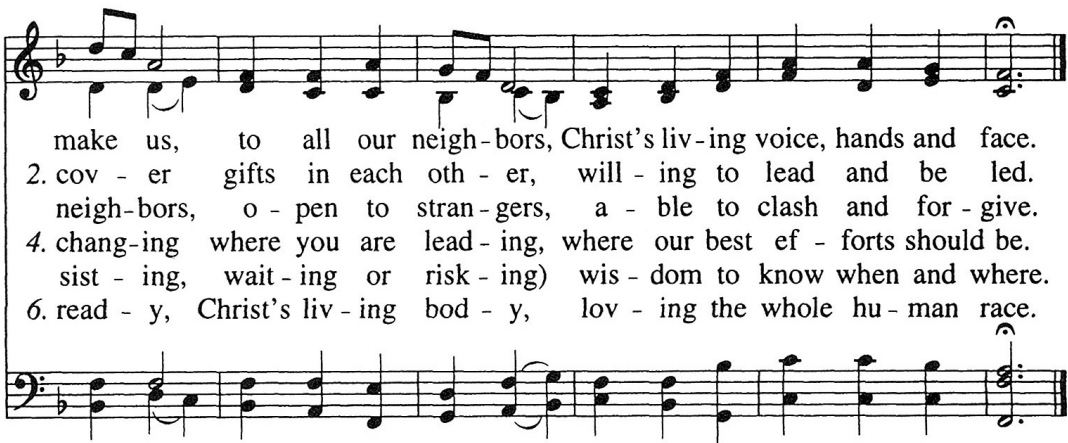
CLOSING HYMN

373

We Are Your People



1. We are your peo - ple, Spir - it of grace, you dare to
2. Joined in com - mu - ni - ty, trea - sured and fed, may we dis -
3. Rich in di - ver - si - ty, help us to live clos - er than
4. Glad of tra - di - tion, help us to see in all life's
5. Give, as we ven - ture jus - tice and care (peace - ful, re -
6. Spir - it, u - nite us, make us, by grace, will - ing and



make us, to all our neigh - bors, Christ's liv - ing voice, hands and face.
2. cov - er gifts in each oth - er, will - ing to lead and be led.
neigh - bors, o - pen to stran - gers, a - ble to clash and for - give.
4. chang - ing where you are lead - ing, where our best ef - forts should be.
sist - ing, wait - ing or risk - ing) wis - dom to know when and where.
6. read - y, Christ's liv - ing bod - y, lov - ing the whole hu - man race.

WORDS: Brian Wren, 1973, rev. 1994
MUSIC: Margaret R. Tucker, 1986

MEETING HOUSE
54.557

COMMUNITY PRAYERS

- We pray for Luke Wendelin as he completes boot camp for the Navy, where he will train to be a medic. Also, Luke would appreciate notes or cards during boot camp; please contact Johanna Wendelin for Luke's address.
- We pray for Claire Morgan's mother Dana Hunt, who is now in the hospital for ongoing cancer-related care and will likely be transitioning to hospice care.
- 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; 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 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 pray for all those touched by gun violence across our country. 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

Confirmation Class for 8/9th graders

Today, 9:30 - 10:45 a.m., The Well

Our year-long Confirmation journey for 8th and 9th graders begins today with a session entitled “Faith and Belief.”



Young Adults: Coffee Corner

Today, 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

Bible Study @ 10:

“Hello, Bible. My name is _____.”

Today, 10:00 - 10:45 a.m., Harter Room and via Zoom

Feel like maybe you would like to get a better feel for what the Bible has to do with your life and the world today? Here’s a chance to take a first step in that direction. Pastor Mike will be helping us get to know the Bible better as part of our 10:00 O’Clock Hour offerings this fall. These sessions are for everyone, no matter your Bible background. The Bible has a fascinating personality, so take the first step in getting to know it: Hello Bible. My name is _____.



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!

TODAY AT FIRST CHURCH

Call to Special Congregational Meeting

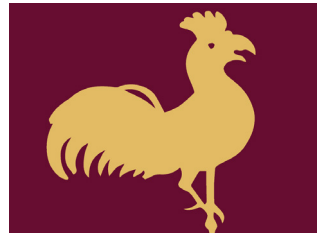
Notice is hereby given that
a Special Congregational Meeting of
First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, United Church of Christ,
will be held in its 390th year at 12:30 p.m.,
Sunday the 21st of September 2025,
in person in Margaret Jewett Hall and via Zoom conference
for the following purposes:

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



*draft minutes of
June 22 meeting*

GROWING CLOSER TO GOD

Regathering Season 2025



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.

REGATHERING SEASON AT FIRST CHURCH

First Church Financial Update September 2025

In this Regathering season, your Treasurers want to provide a financial update building on the report made during the Special Congregational Meeting in June. We think it is important for everyone to know where we stand as we work on the 2026 operating budget and prepare for our fall Stewardship campaign.

The good news is that **if we achieve full payment of our 2025 pledges** we will finish the year with a 40% reduction in the budget deficit (from \$98,000 to around \$60,000). This reflects both an increase in revenue and reduction in expenses. We want to thank everyone who has helped contribute to this improved picture through their generosity in giving and restraint in spending. These are wonderful signs of the spirit of belonging and commitment here at First Church!

However, the reality is we are still facing a deficit this year of more than \$50,000, and the early projections for 2026 are showing a deficit in the range of \$65-80,000 if we hold expenses level. As we enter the active search for our new settled minister, it is important that we can demonstrate a shared commitment to reaching a sustained level of financial health and stability —something that is important to attract the best candidates.

Therefore, we would like to encourage everyone to prayerfully consider whether you might be able to make an additional gift or pledge during 2025 (adding a 13th month on your pledge perhaps?). And as we enter our Stewardship campaign for 2026 in the coming weeks, please be as generous as possible. These efforts, along with our ongoing work to control costs on the expense side, will go a long way towards achieving our commitment to a balanced operating budget.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to either of us with any questions you may have. We continue to be thankful for the deep and generous commitment of time, talent, and treasure from everyone in this congregation.

Faithfully,

Jim Cairns, *Treasurer*

John McCarty, *Associate Treasurer*



REGATHERING SEASON AT FIRST CHURCH



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) 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.***

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) or Martha Mueller Cook (marthamuellercook@gmail.com).



AGING WITH GRACE

a monthly conversation about
the joys and challenges of aging



Breaking Bread Together: Stewardship Meals This Fall

Building on the success of our summer gatherings, the Stewardship Committee is organizing a few more meals to help foster community, connection, and a sense of belonging. A few folks have already kindly agreed to host; now we just need to find attendees to join in! If you would be interested in sharing a meal and connecting with about 8-10 others from First Church, please

express your interest by [completing this form](#). All you need to do is indicate your interest, and the Stewardship Committee will follow up to confirm the date, time, location, and coordinate a potluck sign-up!

Thinking About Joining the Church?

Thursday, September 25, 7:00 - 8:00 p.m., via Zoom

For those interested in church membership, join Pastor Mike via Zoom for the second of two Thursday evening sessions. Then we'll welcome new members in worship on Sunday, October 5. See/contact Pastor Mike (mike@firstchurchcambridge.org) with any questions. And welcome!



REGATHERING SEASON AT FIRST CHURCH

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](#).



Invitation to Contribute to Coffee Hour

Please help us make worship as delicious as it is spiritually sustaining! For Coffee Hour each week we are looking for 3-4 households to bring 3 dozen cookies each, or the equivalent of snacks such as cheese & crackers or fruit. In general, the church has a No Nuts policy. If possible, please include a brief list of relevant ingredients for those with allergies. [SIGN UP HERE.](#)

CALENDAR

Today's Events

9:15 a.m.	Choir Rehearsal
9:45 a.m.	Young Adults: Coffee Corner at Pavement Coffee
10:00 a.m.	Christian Formation: Bible Study @ 10
11:00 a.m.	Morning Worship
11:20 a.m.	Church School: Godly Play, Middler, and Bible 101 classes
12:30 p.m.	Special Congregational Meeting & Luncheon
7:30 p.m.	Night Song

FIRST CHURCH
IN CAMBRIDGE
CONGREGATIONAL

389 YEARS
ON THE WAY
1 6 3 6 – 2 0 2 5

The Week Ahead

Monday, September 22

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

Tuesday, September 23

6:00 p.m. Executive Council Potluck & Meeting, home of Linda Ziebell

Wednesday, September 24

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

7:00 p.m. Missions & Social Justice Committee, via Zoom

Thursday, September 25

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

Friday, September 26

12:00 p.m. Friday Café, Margaret Jewett Hall

6:00 p.m. All-Church Retreat begins at Craigville Retreat Center

Sunday, September 28

9:15 a.m. Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary

10:00 a.m. Christian Formation: Small Groups, Harter Room and via Zoom

11:00 a.m. Morning Worship, Sanctuary and via livestream

11:20 a.m. Church School: Creative Arts Workshop, front lawn & walkway

1:00 p.m. All-Church Retreat ends at Craigville Retreat Center

7:30 p.m. Night Song, Sanctuary and via livestream



scan for online bulletin

Visit 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.