

photo by Steve Brown

Healing Service October 19, 2025



Grounded in God • Growing in Community • Acting in Love

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 Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend J. S. Bach

*HYMN 32 God of Grace and God of Laughter

*GREETING Bappu Antony

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 fears, our loves, our hopes for healing and wholeness.

L: Here, may all who hope for healing find peace and strength.

C: Here, may all who hope for wholeness find the Spirit of reconciliation.

L: And remember, friends, we can all be agents of healing for others.

C: Indeed, this day we pray to be pathways of the Spirit,

as God is at work in us all.

WORDS OF WELCOME

ANTHEM It Is Well With My Soul Philip Bliss, arr. P. Sykes

CONFESSING

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

SILENCE

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

L: Please join together in prayer:

C: Most merciful God,

we confess that we have strayed from your way,

in thought, word, and deed,

by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our whole heart;

we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
Grant us true repentance, and hearts eager for the work of repair.
Through the love and faithfulness of Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

*GREETING OF PEACE

L: The peace of Christ be with you!

C: And also with you!

*HYMN 281

Spirit of the Living God

*MUTUAL BLESSING Mike Solberg

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

Children up through 7th grade are now invited to their Church School classes. 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 Genesis 32:22-31

REFLECTION Mike Solberg

^{*}You are invited to stand. Hymns proceeded 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.

A TIME OF HEALING

INVITATION Kate Layzer

BLESSING OF OIL AND HANDS

Lisa DiNardo, Dean Eaton, Will Erickson, Lisa McCarty, Beth Spaulding, Mary Martha Thiel, and Laurie Williams

HEALING RITUAL FOR HOME VIEWERS

HYMNS

441 Eternal Spirit of the Living Christ

424 We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight

400 There is a Balm in Gilead

86 The Lone, Wild Bird

CONCLUDING PRAYER Noël Grisanti

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 OUR LIFE TOGETHER

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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 <u>all-in-one link</u> for gifts from your bank account or by credit/debit card:



OFFERTORY Saranam Punjabi hymn

*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 425 O Love That Will Not Let Me Go

*BENEDICTION

VOLUNTARY Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier J. S. Bach

Today's Worship Leaders

Bappu Antony liturgist Lisa DiNardo, Dean Eaton, Will Erickson, Lisa McCarty, Deacons

Beth Spaulding, Mary Martha Thiel, and Laurie Williams

Noël Grisanti

Kate Layzer

Lee Prouty

Minister of Street Outreach
Facilities Manager
Mike Solberg

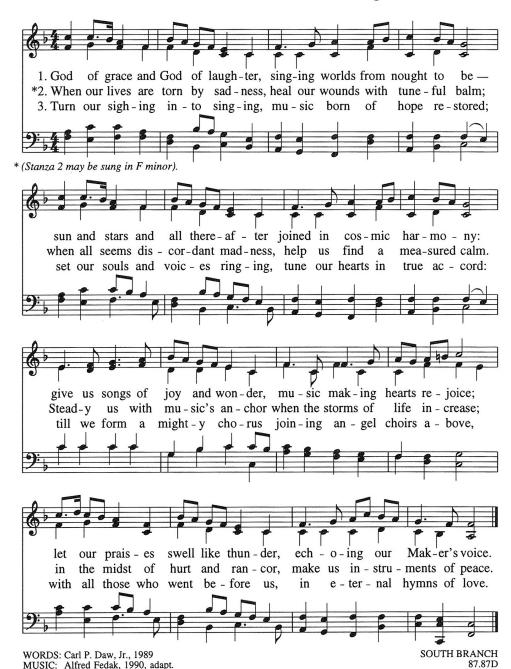
Peter Sykes

Music Director

New to First Church?

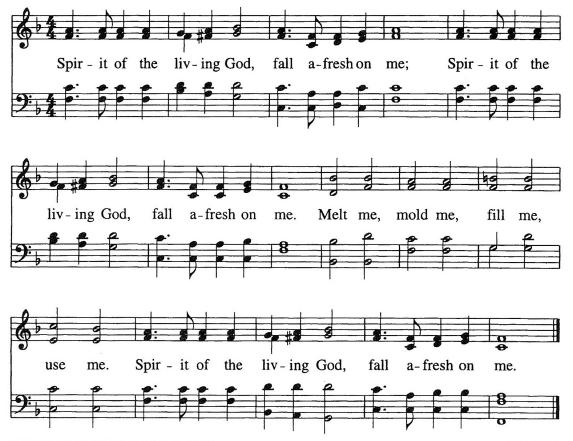
Consider filling out a **welcome card** (online or on the small clipboards) to get connected.

God of Grace and God of Laughter



-Hymn Insert 1-

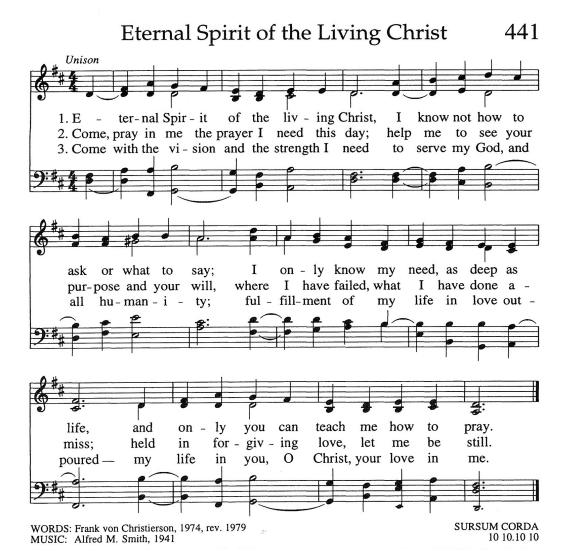
Spirit of the Living God



WORDS and MUSIC: Daniel Iverson, 1926

Daniel Iverson was a North Carolina Presbyterian minister who was moved to create this response while attending a revival service.

IVERSON 75.75.875 © 1935 Birdwing Music, admin. EMI Christian Music Publishing



We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight



MUSIC: Samuel McFarland, c. 1816; harm. FCC, 1997



WORDS and MUSIC: African-American spiritual Here is a positive response to the question asked in Jeremiah 8:22: 'Is there no balm in Gilead?' Hope for the future is sustained in the painful present.

BALM IN GILEAD 76.76 w. refrain

86

The Lone, Wild Bird



WORDS: Sts. 1, 2, Henry Richard McFadyen, 1925, alt.; sts. 3 - 5, Marty Haugen, 1991 MUSIC: Walker's *Southern Harmony*, 1835; harm. David N. Johnson, 1968

PROSPECT LM

O Love That Will Not Let Me Go

425



COMMUNITY PRAYERS

- We pray for Alice Napoleon-Jones and her family as they mourn the loss of her mother Judith Semmler, who died on Thursday, October 9, after a long battle with cancer.
- We pray for Lya, a newcomer to First Church, who is living with Lupus and severely reduced kidney function.
- We pray for Claire Morgan and her family as they mourn the loss of her mother Dana Hunt, who died on October 2.
- We pray for a friend of the church undergoing treatment for advanced cancer, and for her 12-yr-old son, feeling all the stresses of the situation.
- We pray for Ellen Smith, Devin Hansen's aunt, who continues treatment for cancer, which has now spread to other parts of her body.
- 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: Betsy Opitz; Jeff Morgan, Gaylen's brother; Tim Schoenfield, Henry's brother; Louise Higginbotham, Sarah'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 federal government shutdown, including those who are losing their jobs and those who are concerned about looming cuts to health care subsidies.
- 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 violent 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 US cities under threat of militarization by our federal government, including Portland, Oregon, and Chicago, Illinois.
- 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; in Ukraine; in Haiti; and in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We pray with hope for the people of Gaza as Israel and Hamas take steps to exchange hostages and move toward a ceasefire.

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 continues today with a session entitled "Meeting God Through Scripture."





Adult Formation: Bible Study @ 10 Today, 10:00 - 10:45 a.m., Harter Room and via Zoom

Pastor Mike is 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 . . .

Healing Service

Today at 11:00 a.m., Sanctuary and via livestream

At our periodic healing services, we offer an opportunity to reflect together on God's healing peace and to participate in a simple healing ritual involving a brief prayer, laying on of hands, and—for



those who wish—anointing with oil, an ancient Christian practice. We invite forward all who would like to participate. For those who prefer to remain seated, there will be music and a time for individual prayers.



A Conversation about the Crisis in Gaza Today, 12:30 - 1:30 p.m., Harter Room and via Zoom

A number of First Church folks began meeting earlier this year as a Faith & Life Group to explore issues of peace and justice in the Holy Land. Begun as an opportunity to educate themselves, the group now feels called to

bring the discussion to the wider congregation. Members of the group will share their personal reflections, and information will be shared about a resolution regarding the situation in Gaza that was passed this summer at the UCC's General Synod. All are warmly invited to come listen, learn, and reflect on how God may be calling us to respond as a congregation.

Family Choir Rehearsals

Today and Sunday, October 26, 12:30 - 1:00 p.m., Chapel

First Church folks of all ages and experience levels are warmly invited to join the Family Choir for a few rehearsals leading up to a musical offering in our All Saints Worship on November 2. Grab a coffee and cookie after worship today and next Sunday, and head to the Chapel to learn a simple old-timey hymn with Sarah Higginbotham.



COMING UP AT FIRST CHURCH



Joining Sunday, October 26

Have you been thinking about making First Church your "Yes,-this-is-where-I-belong" church home, by formally becoming a member of the church? While everyone is welcome to participate in (nearly) all aspects of church life, membership publicly shows your commitment and your connection (and allows you to vote in congregational

meetings, woohoo!). It is a recognition that following Jesus Christ is not simply an individual affair, but also involves intentional community. See here for more information about how we at First Church think of church membership.

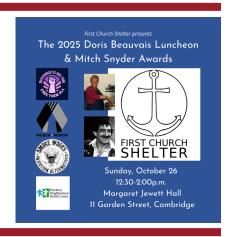
If you are ready to join next Sunday, October 26, here are four steps to follow:

- let Pastor Mike know you intend to join;
- review the new member questions and our church covenant, found here;
- by the end of Tuesday, October 21, <u>fill out this information form</u>, including a short bio to introduce yourself to others; and
- gather in Hastings Common (just through the door by the Children's Book Corner) on October 26 at 10:15 to receive flowers and name tags and review the flow of the service.

If you have any questions or would like to talk more about membership or about Joining Sunday, please do not hesitate to reach out to <u>Mike Solberg.</u>

The First Church Shelter staff and the Shelter Oversight Committee warmly invite everyone to this year's annual celebration of those doing the good work of care and compassion in the world.

Enjoy a delicious lunch and learn more about the worthy organizations receiving the 2025 Mitch Snyder awards.





Breaking Bread Together: Stewardship Meals This Fall

If you would be interested in sharing a meal and connecting with about 8-10 others from First Church, please express your interest by <u>completing this form</u>. 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!

OPPORTUNITIES AT FIRST CHURCH



Baby Food & Diaper Drive, Sundays, October 19 & 26

Harvard Undergraduate Food Security Initiative, a student organization dedicated to advocating for food and nutrition in the Greater Boston area, has invited us to participate in their baby food & diaper drive. Please bring your contributions of non-perishable baby food, baby formula, diapers, and wipes; and look for a collection bin in Hastings

Common on Sundays, October 19 & 26. Questions? Contact Kathy Williams, Co-Chair of the Missions & Social Justice Committee.

GBIO House Meeting

Sunday, November 2, 12:15 - 1:00 p.m., Margaret Jewett Hall

This month, the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO) launched a House Meeting Campaign amongst its 60+ member institutions to discern which issues are animating us most. This is a critical step in building toward winnable local campaigns and in drawing local congregations into closer solidarity with one another. The focus of a house meeting (which only sometimes takes place in an actual home!)



is on personal stories – we emerge from these conversations knowing not just what people care about, but why. We'll be organizing house meetings for us within First Church as well as for FCCers to talk with others from nearby Camberville congregations. After worship on November 2, we'll gather around tables in MJH to take the first step in turning private pain into public action. All are welcome; please join us!



FCS Hosts a Community Picnic

On Friday, October 10, the First Church Shelter Public Shower Team hosted a Community Picnic on the Cambridge Common.

The shower team is always looking for ways to help poor, unhoused, and other marginalized members of the community to feel connected and cared for.

FIRST CHURCH NEWS

The following letter from Emma was emailed to the community on Tuesday, October 14, 2025.

Dear beloved First Church community,

At long last, hello! I am sending love to each of you from this side of the motherhood threshold, where baby Juniper has just turned five months old. We have traversed worlds together as a little family in these last months, and I have been so grateful for the blessing of this time to devote myself to motherhood and its unfolding becomings. Even as my world has transformed, I've thought of you all so often and wondered how you are doing in these seasons of the so-muchness of life: joy and fear and grace and grief, all at once. I am so looking forward to reconnecting on November 23rd, when I'll return to church with you all.



This time has also been a time of discernment for Aram and me, and I'm writing today to share the **bittersweet news that we are plotting a move to Maine in early 2026**. Aram, who, as many of you know, is also a pastor, has an opportunity to expand his work as Lead Pastor of Edgecomb Community Church in midcoast Maine, a move that will allow me to spend this next year focusing on mothering Juniper and deepening my offerings of spiritual accompaniment and direction for all life stages. And I have dreams of planting a woods church, where community gathers to embody and honor incarnational divinity in all its forms.

While I am excited for what awaits us in Maine, it is also a decision full of heartache for me because it means leaving the Boston area, where I have such strong roots, and ending my time with you all as your Pastoral Associate. I am so grateful for all that the last two years have held; it has been a gift to learn to pastor alongside you, to be part of this community in the vulnerability and possibility of pastoral transition, and to feel how the Spirit moves among and through you in a million ways. And you all, in turn, have loved me through so many life thresholds! I will deeply miss being in this role with you, and look forward to the ways our paths may continue to weave.

My last day at First Church will be Sunday, January 11th, and in the intervening weeks, I'll be making some time available for visits with anyone who would like to sit together, in person or on Zoom, and share some time before I leave this role. <u>You can sign up here.</u>

Friends, you have been so with me in this time. Juniper and I have spent many a tummy time session on the gorgeous quilt designed by our young people and stitched with love by so many of you. We have been so blessed with your presence and prayers — I can feel it! And I am so looking forward to having some weeks of reconnection before my time at First Church in Cambridge comes to an end.

With deep love and gratitude, *Emma*

FIRST CHURCH NEWS



A Note from the Moderator October 15, 2025

Dear friends,

Hopefully you've had the chance to read the update from our Pastoral Associate, Emma Mitchell, her husband Aram, and baby Juniper, printed on page 9 of this bulletin. There's good news: Emma will be returning from maternity leave on November 23, 2025! Her leadership and spiritual insight

have been greatly missed. Sadly, her time back at First Church won't be long, and her last Sunday with us will be January 11, 2026. Emma will be moving to mid-coast Maine where Aram has been called to expanded ministry. Thanks be to God for this new horizon, and for all the time we've had with Emma in our community!

Emma's departure will be a serious loss to all who have come to count her as a teacher, spiritual leader, and friend. If you've never heard an Emma sermon before, listen to this*, and you'll understand how wonderful her contributions to First Church are. Thankfully, though her talent is singular, the staff at First Church all feel confident that they are able to manage her workload in this interim time. After getting input from the staff, the church officers and Deacon co-chairs agree that as we're in the search process for our next Senior Minister, we will hold off on looking for a new Pastoral Associate. This will allow the next minister to have input on an important hiring decision, and allow the congregation to focus our energy on one search at a time. We are blessed to have Mike, Kate, Karen and Noël all leading us in worship, and the rest of the staff (especially Sarah and Kirsten) carrying some of Emma's other responsibilities for now.

I hope you'll all be there to welcome Emma back on November 23, and to celebrate our time together on January 11!

peace,
Phil Servello-Jones
Moderator







*Watch Emma's November 2024 sermon on our YouTube channel.

CALENDAR

Today's Events

9:15 a.m. Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary

9:30 a.m. Confirmation Class for 8/9th graders, The Well

10:00 a.m. Christian Formation: Bible Study @ 10

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. A Conversation about the Crisis in Gaza, Harter Room and via Zoom

12:30 p.m. Family Choir Rehearsal, Chapel

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

The Week Ahead

Monday, October 20

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

6:00 p.m. Faith & Life Group: Care for the Caregivers, via Zoom

Tuesday, October 21

7:30 p.m. Shelter Oversight Committee, via Zoom

Wednesday, October 22

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

Friday, October 24

12:00 p.m. Friday Café, MJH

Sunday, October 26

9:00 a.m. Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary

10:00 a.m. Christian Formation: Small Groups @ 10, Harter Room & via Zoom 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship: Joining Sunday, Sanctuary and via livestream

11:20 a.m. Church School: Creative Arts Workshop, Harter Rooms

12:15 p.m. Refreshments in Hastings Common

12:30 p.m. Doris Beauvais Luncheon & Mitch Snyder Awards, MJH

12:30 p.m. Family Choir Rehearsal, Chapel

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



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FIRST CHURCH
IN CAMBRIDGE

389YEARS

ON THE WAY

1636-2025

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- 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.