

**First Congregational Christian
UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST**

April 2025



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From the pastor – April 2025

Have you ever noticed that you see a lot more by walking than you do by driving? This simple and obvious fact became substantially more real to me after completing an assignment for a class in seminary.

I was taking a required class on mission studies and our professor assigned something called a “Religious Landscapes” project. For this project, each student would have to walk every single street within a two-mile radius of our homes. As we strolled through each neighborhood and boulevard, we were to write down, chart, and (if allowed) even take pictures of every single religious symbol that we encountered on our trek.

A “religious symbol” – for the purposes of this project – was any icon that signaled religious devotion in the broadest sense. So, for example, if I saw a Dodger bumper sticker, I kept walking. But if I saw a Dodger bumper sticker along with a license plate frame and window decal, I would chalk up that little assemblage to a religious symbol – a shrine, if you will.

As I walked slowly but surely up and down those Pasadena streets, I saw Buddha statues, murals of the Virgin Mary, a painted quote by the Quaker, George Fox, and happened upon a Hispanic family celebrating a Christening. I witnessed acupuncture studios, athletic and political expressions, houses of worship, and non-profit organizations (religious and otherwise).

It was quite a lesson in contextual learning, but perhaps the greatest lesson came from simply slowing down. Every time I ventured down a familiar street, I was caught off-guard by disparate feelings of familiarity and unfamiliarity. It was as though I was watching a movie I had seen before, but this time it was in high definition and in 3D.

I could see angles I hadn’t noticed before when driving by. I could see more features in the trees, and the gardens, and the tiny architectural features in houses that I had never noticed before. Slowing down and stopping for a while completely transformed my journey.

I think it’s the same way with Lent and Holy Week. In our time and place, there are many Christians who have never observed Lent or Holy Week and they cruise right through to Easter – no journey, no table, no cross – and then, BOOM! Happy Resurrection Day! Of course, I have no interest in judging these folks, but it is what it is, as they say.

In recent years, I have found a great deal of value in slowing down and taking in Scripture’s narrative surroundings – of stopping to hear Jesus teach here and heal there; of hearing him foretell his death, of watching him ride into Jerusalem during Passover, and of joining him at the Last Supper, washing the disciples’ feet.

And because there’s no resurrection without death, I look forward to the sacredness of Good Friday and the silence of Holy Saturday. Because when you slow down, even for a moment, there are so many more details to take in.

I hope you will join us through the rest of Lent and throughout Holy Week. If you can, slow down, take it all in, and walk step-by-step in pilgrimage with Jesus and with your church family. And let the sweetness of the resurrection be made all the sweeter by our journey toward that destination together.

APRIL WORSHIP CALENDAR
Sundays at 11:00 AM

Worship is livestreamed on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/1stUCC>

- April 6** **Fifth Sunday in Lent (Communion Celebrated)**
Luke 8:18-30; "Listening to Jesus" with Rev. Willson
- April 13** **Palm Sunday Worship**
Luke 19:28-40; "Don't Miss Your Part" with Rev. Willson
- Apr 17 (Thu)** **Maundy Thursday Potluck (5:30 PM) & Worship (6:30 PM)**
Luke 23:1-56; "A Liturgy of the Passion" with Rev. Willson
- April 20** **Easter Sunday Worship Celebration (Brunch at 9:30 AM)**
Luke 24:1-12; "Fasting from Death, Feasting on Life" with Rev. Willson
- April 27** **Second Sunday of Easter**
Guest Pastor: Dr. Phyllis R.P. Tessieri



Holy Week at First



Palm Sunday - April 13. We will begin at 9:30 AM with Adult Faith Formation in the Sanctuary. Daniel will lead a Bible study on Psalm 118 and its role as the background to the triumphal entry story told in Luke 19. Come listen to the story of Palm Sunday in "high definition". Then, for 11 AM worship we will proclaim the one "who comes in the name of the Lord", with a special Palm Sunday worship service.

Maundy Thursday, April 17. We will share an informal potluck meal beginning at 5:30 PM in the fellowship area, with communion celebrated in the midst of the meal at 6 PM. That meal will be followed by a "Liturgy of the Passion" worship service at 6:30 PM.

The Stations of the Cross will be set up on the grounds outside the church building, beginning the morning of **Good Friday** and staying up through the evening of **Holy Saturday**. Come at a time that suits you to pray and contemplate the Passion of Jesus alongside our eight stations. Open to the public.

Easter Sunday on April 20 begins with brunch being served at 9:30 AM in the Fellowship Area, provided by the Women's Fellowship. There will be lots of yummy food and Pastor Daniel will offer a brief Easter morning meditation. After enjoying the food and fellowship, we'll gather in the Sanctuary at 11 AM for our Easter Sunday Worship Celebration.

April Birthdays

4/30 Kieran Eggleston



April Anniversaries



Jonathan & Christina Conception 4/08
Gail Christie & Herschell Emery 4/19



Along with all of "Metro Richmond at Prayer," during April let's pray for the Spirit of the Resurrection in Metropolitan Richmond.

Men's Fellowship Breakfast

The Men's Fellowship will meet for breakfast at 9 AM on Saturday, April 12 at River City Diner, 11430 W. Huguenot Rd., Midlothian.



Join us for our monthly Black Lives Matter vigil along Courthouse Road for an hour after worship on **Sunday, April 13.**

We have plenty of extra signs; chairs can be provided if standing for an hour is a hardship.

HVAC repair fund



Don't forget that we are collecting donations to help offset the \$6000 in repairs that were required to get our heating/cooling system back on line. Please designate HVAC on the memo line of your check or Venmo. Thanks!

We are collecting donations of supplies for two special projects this month! Please sign up, and bring items in by the end of April. We appreciate your generosity!



Buckets of Love



The Women's Fellowship is partnering with CARITAS to assemble Welcome Home Kits for residents transitioning from crisis situations into permanent housing. We will pack 15 cleaning buckets with sponges, glass cleaner, paper towels, Lysol, all purpose cleaner, brooms, dustpans, and mops. All items are available at the Dollar Tree. During the month of April, we invite the congregation to help by donating needed items. A container with a list of requested cleaning supplies will be located in the Narthex.

Support for Cuban citizens

Our favorite local youth activist, Elijah Lee, is traveling to Cuba in June and will be filling a suitcase with items to give to the locals that are in short supply there – OTC medicines, vitamins, hygiene products, school supplies, etc. There is a sign-up list of requested items and a collection box in the Narthex.

Also, everyone is invited to join Elijah at the upcoming Amplifying Youth Voices Event on April 5th at 11 AM in Richmond's Monroe Park. This will be the 8th annual event held by Elijah's nonprofit, Hear Our Voices, to highlight the issues facing young people. Originally, this event started as a Child Abuse Awareness event, which he led in Roanoke Rapids, NC when he was 10 years old. Since then, as times have changed, the mission has expanded to include a variety of topics. See the flyer at the end of this newsletter for details.



GOTV Postcard time again!

Early voting for the June 17 Virginia primaries begins May 2. Recent data show that postcarding increased voter turnout in Virginia by 7.6% last year, and voters who participate in the primary are much more likely to vote in November. We will be partnering again with the Center for Common Ground in a non-partisan campaign to promote voter engagement, targeting specific races in communities of color. Postcards, addresses, script, and detailed instructions are provided - you only need to provide stamps. For those who can't afford stamps, we have a limited number that have been donated for this project. If you would like to write postcards, or want more information, contact Gail Christie.

Packets will be available for pickup at church starting April 6.

Spring Meeting of the UCC Potomac Association Sat. May 17 on Zoom

The 2025 spring meeting of the Potomac Association of the Central Atlantic Conference will be held jointly with the Chesapeake Association. This will be a hybrid meeting – both in-person and Zoom options are available. Mark your calendars now; details to follow.

FINDING COMMON GROUND ON A ROCKY ROAD
Potomac Association UCC & Chesapeake Association UCC
Joint Spring Meeting

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, May 17, 2025
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM
St. John's Grace UCC
1000 S Rolling Rd
Catonsville, MD 21228

BUY NOTHING DAY

SATURDAY, APRIL 26

9 am- 1 pm

Rain date May 3

This event is a great way to clear out the clutter in your home (and your storage, garage, and closet, etc.) and to provide for those in need in our community! You are also welcome, of course, to come and “shop” at our Buy Nothing event yourself.

We will have tables set out in the parking lot where you can display your items – and you can also bring your own tables, racks, or blankets to help with your displays. We do ask that you not bring items to the church in advance unless you will be away that day – we will set up the tables by 8 AM Saturday for you to set your items on. If you don't want to stay, or to return at 1 PM to collect any remaining items, they will be donated to Goodwill.

Volunteers will be needed to set up tables on Saturday morning and to take any remaining items to Goodwill at the end of the event.

Please also feel free to share/post the flyer for this event that is at the end of the newsletter



Virtual Easter Lilies for Myanmar/Thailand Earthquake Relief

In lieu of purchasing Easter lilies for our sanctuary this year, we will be collecting donations for relief efforts for the people of Myanmar and Thailand as they recover from the recent devastating earthquakes. The cost of a “virtual” lily is \$17. If you wish to make a donation, to be acknowledged in the Easter worship bulletin, please fill out the form below and place it in the offering plate or return it to the church office with your payment. Please designate “earthquake relief” on your check or Venmo payment.

All requests must be received by Wednesday, April 16.

Name _____ Phone _____

Number of lilies _____

In honor of _____

In memory of _____



8TH ANNUAL YOUTH EMPOWERMENT EVENT

The Year of Young People



Ishika Vij



*Miles
Dillahaunt*



Dia Figueroa



Elijah Lee

Join us!

Monroe Park
Richmond, Virginia

Time Change!

April 5th, 2025
11AM - 12PM

HEAR OUR VOICES

CONTACT: ELIJAH LEE

incredibleelijah@gmail.com
Incredibleelijah.com





4th Annual Community Earth Day Buy Nothing Event

Saturday, April 26 9 AM – 1 PM
First Congregational United Church of Christ
4310 Courthouse Road
(1/2 mi S of Hull Street)

Household items, clothing, kitchenware,
tools, toys, books, small appliances,
furniture, more!

Come and "shop" in our parking lot –
everything is free!!

Rain date May 3