

First Congregational Christian UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST

May 2025



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www.facebook.com/1stUCC

From the Pastor – May 2025

On March 13, 2013, at a time that seems like worlds ago – pre-Trump and pre-pandemic – the papal conclave in Rome elected Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio to be the next Pope. Taking the unprecedented name of St. Francis of Assisi, Pope Francis I would go on to reform his office, if not the whole church.

Francis would make a habit out of forgoing much of the pomp and circumstance that were customary of his position. And to the great dismay of many among the Vatican's establishment, he would expect the same modesty of life from those living and/or working in Vatican City.

I will remember Francis for many things, but three items stand out. First, I remember his washing of feet. Jesus was very clear about people putting their piety on display for personal status seeking. However, Francis's gesture was simultaneously a PR move and an imitation of Christ. Washing the feet of the incarcerated and Muslim refugees, not to mention eating and taking an audience with queer folks, Pope Francis was both ministering to those individuals while he was teaching the church to follow him as he followed Christ.

The second thing I will remember him most for was his encyclical, *Laudato sí*. Pope Francis did not only emulate his namesake through poverty and humble service, but also through his valuation of Creation and humanity's place in it. I wish I had the space to quote some of the encyclical's words, especially the beautiful prayers that open and close the document. However, I'm perhaps better off commending you to read the 70+ page article for yourselves. It is one of the most important writings of the 21st century.

The third thing that sticks out for me is his prophetic challenge to the rich and powerful. One of my favorite quotes of his has to do with his description of trickle-down economics and how the "cup" that is to overflow and create an economic trickle-down from the richer to the poorer is not a cup that tends to stay the same size. Instead, it's a cup that seems always to grow, with less and less to trickle-down to more and more people.

For this reason, and for many others besides, Francis was critical of the MAGA movement in America, and of statements made by the relatively recent Catholic convert, Vice President J.D. Vance. I had hoped that the V.P.'s encounter with Francis might have had the same effect as it did on House Speaker John Boehner in 2015. So much for wishful thinking.

But Vance's visit to see Pope Francis on the eve of his last day brought me back to the juxtaposition of President Trump and Pope Francis, and how the paradox of "greatness" differs completely between the way of the world and the way of Jesus. Trump and those of his ilk, are great men in their own eyes and in performing this "greatness" become people of very small stature. Pope Francis, by contrast, strikes me as someone who trusted Jesus's paradox. In humbling himself (and his office), he was not only raised up but raised his church up with him. Francis showed us greatness. Now he dwells in Eastertide eternal.

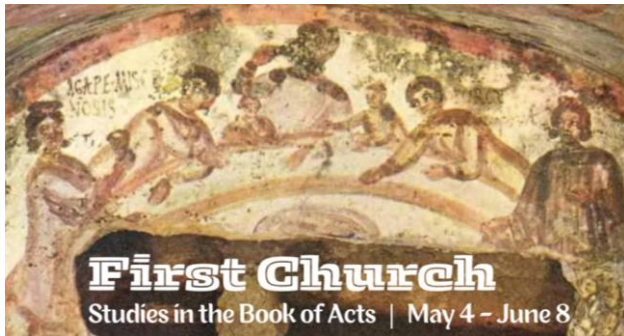
MAY WORSHIP CALENDAR
Sundays at 11:00 a.m.

Services are also streamed via Facebook live at www.facebook.com/1stUCC

- May 4** **Third Sunday of Eastertide (Communion Celebrated)**
Sharing Sunday (Open Mic Service)
- May 11** **Fourth Sunday of Eastertide (Mothers' Day)**
Luke 8:19-21; "Who is My Mother?" with Rev. Willson
- May 18** **Fifth Sunday of Eastertide**
Luke 24:13-35; "Seeing Jesus" with Rev. Willson
- May 25** **Sixth Sunday of Eastertide (Memorial Day Weekend)**
Luke 24:36-49; "On Whether Metaphors Eat Fish" with Rev. Willson

New Adult Faith Formation Series begins May 4.

Join us at 9:30 AM on Sunday mornings as we discuss the Book of Acts.



- May 4 Acts, chapters 1-2
- May 11 Acts, chapters 3-7
- May 18 Acts, chapters 8-12
- May 25 Acts, chapters 13-15
- June 1 Acts, chapters 16-28
- June 8 Concluding Discussion



Along with all of "Metro Richmond at Prayer," during May let's pray for Health Care in Metropolitan Richmond.

May Birthdays

- Chet Walrod 5/07
- Emily Browning 5/10
- Lila Parker 5/14
- Deanna Conception 5/13
- Will Edwards 5/23
- Myra Nagel 5/28



May Anniversaries

- 5/19 Marianne & Michelle Hinton
- 5/27 Emily DeCamp & William Wray

**Men's Fellowship
Breakfast
Saturday, May 17 9 AM**

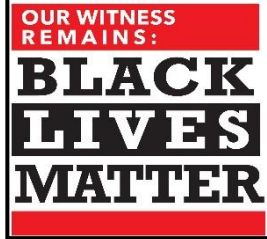


The Men's Fellowship will meet at Joe's Inn - Bon Air, 2616 Buford Road.

**Women's Fellowship
Sunday, May 18**

The Women's Fellowship will meet after church. They will be assembling the CARITAS "Buckets of Love." Thanks to everyone who donated supplies!

Join us for our monthly Black Lives Matter vigil along Courthouse Road for after worship on **Sunday, May 4.**



This continues to be an important witness, and we welcome more participants! We have plenty of extra signs; chairs can be provided if standing is a hardship.

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

REGISTER NOW

Saturday, May 17, 2025
9:00 AM - 2:00 PM
St. John's Grace UCC
1000 S Rolling Rd
Catonsville, MD 21228



The Potomac Association and the Chesapeake Association will be holding a joint Spring meeting on Saturday, May 17, as we welcome our new Associate Conference Minister. **This will be a hybrid meeting; Zoom option available for the 10 AM – 12 PM meeting portion.**

9 a.m. - Join us for breakfast with the new Associate Conference Minister, Holly Jackson.
10 a.m. - Joint spring meeting time.
1 p.m. – Lunch
Register [here](#).



Please continue to support our local Food Pantry



May the 4th Be With You
a concert presented by the
GreenSpring American Youth Harp Ensemble
May 4th 2 PM at St. John's UCC

The GreenSpring American Youth Harp Ensemble is pleased to present **May the 4th Be With You**. Join us for an afternoon of music featuring and inspired by the beloved classics of John Williams and *Star Wars*.

Enjoy a galactic musical journey featuring arrangements that defy the typical expectations of the harp. From classical to contemporary, Broadway to Hollywood, to the moon and back! In lieu of tickets, a free-will offering will be collected to support GreenSpring's community outreach music education programs.

Faith and Democracy 2025 Virginia Primary Elections

Early voting begins on Friday, May 2 for the June 17 primary elections – by mail-in ballot or in person – to choose candidates running for some statewide offices and all 100 members of the Virginia House of Delegates in the fall.



In those cases where only one candidate has qualified for the ballot, there is not a primary election. For statewide offices, there is no Republican primary, and there is no Democratic primary for the governor's race. There are six (!) Democrats vying to be the candidate for the Lieutenant Governor's race: Ghazala Hashmi, Aaron Rouse, Alex Bastani, Babur Lateef, Levar Stoney, and Victor Salgado. Two Democrats are running for the Attorney General nomination: Jay Jones and Shannon Taylor.

There are also primaries for some House of Delegates seats. In our area, there are no Republican primaries but there are several races with multiple Democrats running to challenge a Republican incumbent in the fall. These are: HD72 (incumbent Lee Ware; candidates Bilal Raychouni and Randolph Todd Critzer Jr.), HD73 (incumbent Mark Earley Jr.; candidates Leslie Mehta and Justin Woodford), and HD75 (incumbent Carrie Coyner; candidates Dustin Wade, Lindsey Dougherty, and Stephen Miller-Pitts). If you don't know what district you are in, type in your address at <https://www.vpap.org/local-politics/>. Please educate yourself, and vote to love your neighbor!

Chesterfield early voting is no longer at the Registrar's Office; it has been moved to the Central Library, 7051 Lucy Corr Blvd. Also, there will be no additional satellite library sites open for early voting for this primary election.

Powhatan early voting is at the Office of Elections, 3910 Old Buckingham Rd.

Richmond early voting is at Office of Elections, 2134 West Laburnum Ave.

Henrico early voting is at both the Eastern (3820 Nine Mile Rd.) and Western (4301 East Parham Rd) Government Centers

Candidate websites:

Lt. Gov:

Ghazala Hashmi ghazalaforvirginia.com

Aaron Rouse rouseforvirginia.com

Babur Lateef lateefforva.com

Levar Stoney levarstoney.com

Victor Salgado victorforvirginia.com

Alex Bastani progressivevirginiansforalexbastani.com

Atty General:

Jay Jones jayjones.com

Shannon Taylor shannontaylorva.com

House of Delegates:

Bilal Raychouni (HD 72) brraychouni4va.com

Randolph Critzer (HD 72) randolphcritzer.com

Leslie Mehta (HD73) lesliemehta.com

Justin Woodford (HD73) justinwoodfordforva.com

Dustin Wade (HD 75) dustinwade4va.org

Lindsey Dougherty (HD75) doughertyfordelegate.com

Stephen Miller-Pitts (HD75) millerpitts4va.com