



FRIENDS CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

An Open & Affirming Congregation



Ben Wildflower, *Magnificat* (2016)

December 12, 2021

9:00am

WELCOME

We are honored that you have chosen to spend your Sunday morning with us.

Friends Congregational Church is an **Open & Affirming** congregation of the United Church of Christ. We welcome all people into the full life and ministry of our church—people of all ages, races, sexual orientations, gender identities, and abilities. No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

Third Sunday of Advent

Advent means 'Coming' in Latin. The four Sundays in Advent are observed in preparation for the coming nativity of Jesus, the Christ child. The Advent season is a time of expectant waiting for the celebration of Emanuel, 'God with us,' being born into the world at Christmas. It is also the beginning of the liturgical year in Western Christianity.

Words in **BOLD** are yours to speak out loud

****You are invited to stand**

Scripture for Meditation: Isaiah 12: 2-4 (Inclusive Bible)

You are my deliverer, O God! I trust you and am no longer afraid of you – you are my strength and my refuge. You are my deliverer. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And on that Day you will say: “Give thanks to the Lord, invoke God’s holy Name! Make known among all the people what the Lord has done. Proclaim that God’s Name is exalted.

CHIMING OF THE TRINITY

WORDS OF WELCOME

Rev. Dr. Dan De Leon

PRELUDE

****CALL TO WORSHIP & LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE OF JOY**

Ana-Luisa Ortiz, Diego Rodriguez, Galia A. Ortiz

One: Advent is a time of wonder—the wonder of the holy one of God.

On this third Sunday of Advent, we light this candle for joy and we wonder,

**All: “How can we rejoice when the powerful remain seated on their thrones,
the lowly have not been lifted up, the hungry are empty,
and the rich are filled with good things?”**

One: We light this candle for joy and we wonder,

All: “Christ is our joy!”

One: We light this candle for joy

**All: and we await the coming of the holy one of God
whose reign shall never end.**

****CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE — While We Are Waiting, Come - Tune: Waiting - verse three**

3 Come, Sav - ior, quick - ly come;

come, Sav - ior, quick - ly come.

Je - sus, our Lord, Em - man - u - el,

while we are wait - ing, come.

****PRAYER OF INVOCATION**

Stephanie & Toni Klemm

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Rev. Dr. Dan De Leon

Children are invited to come forward with their masks on and sit at the front on a circle for distancing. Children at home are invited to get closer to their screens at home. All are invited to sing a verse of "This Little Light of Mine" to begin the children's message.

This little light of mine...I'm gonna let it shine!

This little light of mine...I'm gonna let it shine!

This little light of mine...I'm gonna let it shine!

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine!

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Canticle of Mary)

Jennie Adams, *cantor*

**PASSING OF THE PEACE

Rev. Dr. Dan De Leon

One: The peace of Christ be with you all.

Many: And also with you!

HEBREW SCRIPTURE READING – Judges 13:2-7 (CEB)

Stephanie & Toni Klemm

Now there was a certain man from Zorah, from the Danite clan, whose name was Manoah. His wife was unable to become pregnant and had not given birth to any children. The Lord's messenger appeared to the woman and said to her, "Even though you've been unable to become pregnant and haven't given birth, you are now pregnant and will give birth to a son! Now be careful not to drink wine or brandy or to eat anything that is ritually unclean, because you are pregnant and will give birth to a son. Don't allow a razor to shave his head, because the boy is going to be a Nazirite for God from birth. He'll be the one who begins Israel's rescue from the power of the Philistines."

Then the woman went and told her husband, "A man of God came to me, and he looked like God's messenger—very scary! I didn't ask him where he was from, and he didn't tell me his name. He said to me, 'You are pregnant and will give birth to a son, so don't drink wine or brandy or eat anything that is ritually unclean, because the boy is going to be a Nazirite for God from birth until the day he dies.'"

SPECIAL MUSIC — Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion *from* Messiah - George Frideric Händel

Christine Gravelle, *soprano*

GOSPEL READING – Luke 1:46-56 (Inclusive Bible)

Brooke Dooley

My soul proclaims your greatness, O God,
and my spirit rejoices in you, my Savior.

For God has looked with favor
upon your lowly servant

and from this day forward
all generations will call me blessed.
For you, the Almighty, have done great things for me,
and holy is your Name.
Your mercy reached from age to age
for those who fear you.
You have shown strength with your arm;
you have scattered the proud in their conceit;
you have deposed the mighty from their thrones,
and raised the lowly to high places.
You have filled the hungry with good things,
While you have sent the rich away empty.
You have come to the aid of Israel your servant,
mindful of your mercy –
the promise you made to our ancestors –
to Sarah and Abraham
and their descendants forever.

One: The word of God for the people of God.

All: God is still speaking. Thanks be to God!

THE MESSAGE

Brooke Dooley

MOMENT FOR REFLECTION

INVITATION TO SHARE

Stephanie & Toni Klemm

OFFERTORY

Secure online giving via Church Office Giving at bit.ly/givetofriends

GivePlus Text to 833-421-0009

Venmo to 979-446-5746 or @friendsucc

****DOXOLOGY**

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise God all creatures here below: alleluia, alleluia!
Praise God the source of all our gifts,
Praise Jesus Christ whose power uplifts,
Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit,
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!**

****PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

Rev. Trent Williams

****THE LORD'S PRAYER (unison)**

Rev. Trent Williams

**Our God, in whom our spirit rejoices, we glorify you.
May your mercy reach from age to age, so earth may know heaven.
Raise the lowly to high places, and fill the hungry with good things,
So that we may be mindful of your mercy.
Lead us not into arrogance but deliver us from pride.
For you have remembered your promise and looked with favor upon our lowliness.
Amen.**

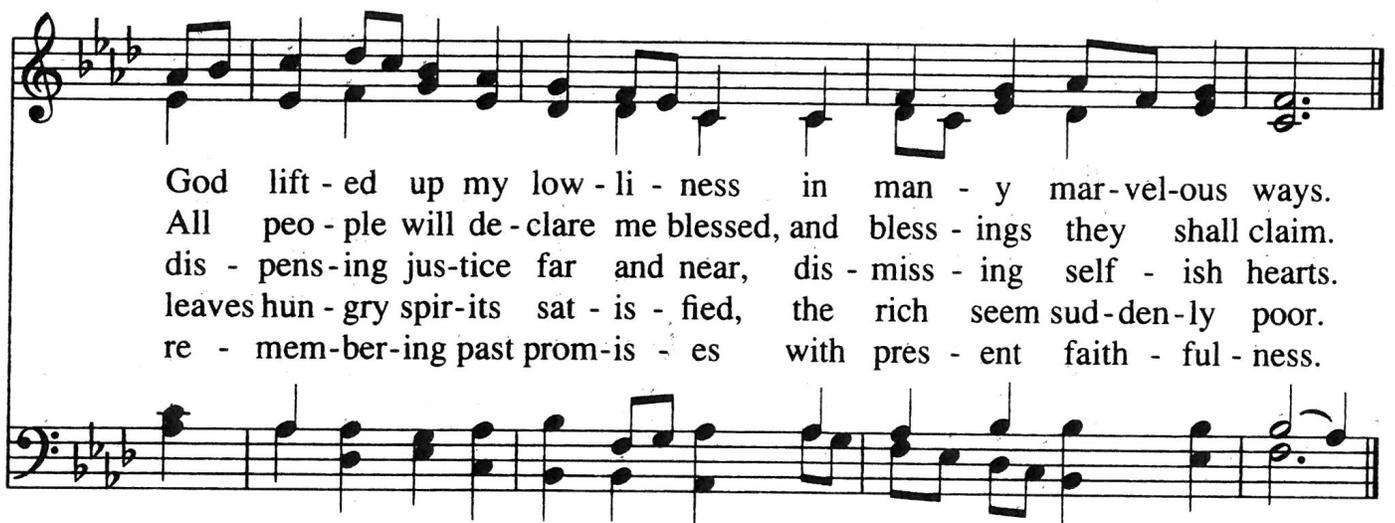
COMMUNITY LIFE THIS WEEK

Rev. Dr. Dan De Leon, Rev. Trent Williams

****CLOSING HYMN — My Soul Gives Glory to My God - Tune: Morning Song**



1 My soul gives glo - ry to my God. My heart pours out its praise.
2 My God has done great things for me: yes, ho - ly is God's name.
3 From age to age, to all who fear, such mer - cy love im - parts,
4 Love casts the might-y from their thrones, pro - motes the in - se - cure,
5 Praise God, whose lov - ing cov - e - nant sup - ports those in dis - tress,



God lift - ed up my low - li - ness in man - y mar - vel - ous ways.
All peo - ple will de - clare me blessed, and bless - ings they shall claim.
dis - pens - ing jus - tice far and near, dis - miss - ing self - ish hearts.
leaves hun - gry spir - its sat - is - fied, the rich seem sud - den - ly poor.
re - mem - ber - ing past prom - is - es with pres - ent faith - ful - ness.

****BENEDICTION**

Brooke Dooley

POSTLUDE

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Instrumental Music:

Prelude: Angel of Joy - David Lanz (both services, if prelude is being used)

Offertory: Once in Bethlehem (Incorporating tunes: *German Carol*, *St. Louis*, and *Irby*) - Ruth Elaine Schram

Postlude: Angels from the Realms of Glory - Henry T. Smart, arranged by Melody Bober

Scriptures for next Sunday, December 19: 1 Samuel 1:19-28, Matthew 1:18-25

FIRST TIME AT FRIENDS? If you are a guest with us today, please let us know. Welcome cards are located in the chair backs to fill out and bring to the baptismal font during today's offertory. If you are joining us online for today's service, you will find an Online Visitor Card at <https://www.friends-ucc.org/your-first-visit>. We are so glad you are here, so please let us know if there is anything we can do for you.

CHILDCARE: We invite children to participate fully in our community and worship life. Children of all ages are welcome in worship or you may choose childcare, offered for ages 1-5 in the nursery down the hall through the piano side double doors. We currently have Covid Protocols in place, which you can find posted outside the nursery door.

| ADVENT/CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES & CELEBRATIONS | |
|---|---|
| Fourth Sunday of Advent + New Member Sunday | <i>Sunday, December 19th</i> |
| Longest Night Service | <i>Wednesday, December 15th, 6:30 p.m.</i> |
| Christmas Eve Handbell Concert | <i>Friday, December 24th, 6:30 p.m.</i> |
| Christmas Eve Service | <i>Tuesday, December 24th, 7:00 p.m.</i> |

TODAY - CHILDREN- & YOUTH-LED CHRISTMAS PAGEANT, 11AM: Today, the children and youth of Friends Church are offering a hybrid Christmas pageant in the 11am service. Most of the pageant will be in-person with some of the parts appearing on the screens, enabling us to include all of our young people who wanted to participate.

TODAY - LONGEST NIGHT MUSIC REHEARSAL INVITATION: This Wednesday evening, December 15th, Friends Church offers a contemplative worship service called the Longest Night for those of us needing respite from the energetic frivolity of the holiday season. The Longest Night music is led by volunteer musicians playing three songs from the Taizé community, and the Advent hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel." If you enjoy singing or playing an instrument and would like to join this informal ensemble, please join us today in the double classroom immediately following the 11am service. Rehearsal will last no longer than 45 minutes.

ANGEL TREE FOLLOW-UP: We've been celebrating the great news that each of the 60 children from the Brazos County Child Welfare Board have been sponsored for Christmas. If you sponsored a child, here are details for delivering those presents: Your wrapped Christmas presents may be dropped off in the narthex of Friends Church by the Christmas trees before or after services this Sunday, 12/12, or during church office hours (9am – 1pm, M – F), or at one of the following times: Saturday, Dec.11, 10-12pm; Sunday, Dec. 12, 3-6pm; Monday, Dec. 13, 3-6pm. If you have any questions, contact Mary Howell (mhowell61@gmail.com, 979-219-8007) or Anne Wehrly (awehrly@suddenlink.net, 979-220-0714). If you need items picked up from your home, arrangements can be made. Presents will be delivered to the CPS office *Tuesday morning, December 14*. Note: Food and gas cards to be distributed by our pastors to our neighbors in need are also being received in the gift card box under the trees in the narthex or mailed or dropped by the church office.

THE LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE, 6:30pm, Wednesday, December 15th

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." –Matthew 5:4

The Christmas season is often marked by expressions of excitement and happiness. It's a time for family and friends to gather, and for congregations to worship, pointing to the hope found in the coming of the Christ child. However, this time of joy and expectation can often overshadow the pain and loneliness many experience during this season. Different life circumstances make joviality difficult for many in our congregation and community. Recognizing this reality and the need for safe, inclusive space where solace and healing can breathe, we will offer a Longest Night Service at Friends Church on Wednesday night, December 15th at 6:30pm.

Longest Night Services, or Blue Christmas services, are typically held on or around the Winter Solstice. Daniel Benedict points out, "There is an interesting convergence for this day as it is also the traditional feast day for Saint Thomas the Apostle. This linkage invites making some connections between Thomas's struggle to believe the tale of Jesus' resurrection, the long nights just before Christmas, and the struggle with darkness and grief faced by those living with loss." Whether the holidays are a difficult time for you personally, spread the word about this service so that it can serve as a ministry of hope for our community. All are welcome.

CHRISTMAS EVE AT FRIENDS CHURCH – HAND BELLS, COMMUNION, & CAROLS BY

CANDLELIGHT: After not being able to gather in person for Christmas Eve last year, we're going all out. Beginning at 6:30pm on Christmas Eve, the hand bell choir will be presenting a short pre-service concert of holiday music that will be sure to capture the magic and mystery of the Christ Child's birth. Then at 7pm, the Christmas Eve service of communion and carols by candlelight is offered. Masks are required for the in-person concert and worship service, all of which will also be livestreamed.

ONE SERVICE ONLY FOR THE SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS, 12/26: The 9am service will not be offered on Sunday, December 26. Instead, all are invited to the one service offered at Friends Church that morning at 11am. We will enjoy a festive morning of lessons and carols for Christmastide. All are welcome.

FRONT ENTRANCE SPRUCED UP, MANY THANKS TO JILL CETINA AND WEIHSUEH CHIU!: Did you notice the front entrance and the fountain last week? Many thanks to Jill Cetina and Weihsueh Chiu for finding contractors, hiring them, and supervising them to clean up and repair the front entrance! The fountain has had all the loose tile re-grouted and an exterior stucco coating applied. The tile cross set in the entrance walkway was completely reset with some new tiles replacing cracked ones and other tiles repaired. And, the steps and handrails were repainted with power washing done on the porch! In addition, the front flower bed has new edging stones, new mulch, and new lighting. There are also some new sage bushes and trees replacing the ones lost in the freeze. Many thanks to Jill and Weihsueh.

WORSHIP SERVICES NEED YOUR HELP: We need greeters for the 9am and/or 11am services and help with communion. "If I volunteer, what exactly would I be doing?" Greeters for the 9am service arrive at Friends Church at 8:30am to take three flags to the street (a sign that we are open and would love guests to join us for worship!), put colored dots on the floor for our kids to sit on during the children's message, and then greet people at the sanctuary door with a worship guide, do a headcount of service attendees, and, at the end of the service, take the offerings and Welcome and Pray cards from the baptismal font to the church office. Greeters for the 11am service arrive at Friends Church at 10:30am to replenish the chair backs with cards and pens as needed, put colored dots on the floor for our kids to sit on during the children's message, and then greet people at the sanctuary door with a worship guide, do a headcount of service attendees, and, at the end of the service, take the offerings and Welcome and Pray cards from the baptismal font to the church office. Communion volunteers (AKA communion stewards) for the 9am service prep the communion trays with cups of wine and juice and the communion plates with cubes or wafers of bread. Additionally, one round loaf of bread, a pitcher of juice, and an empty cup to pour the juice into are prepared for the ministers to break the bread and pour the cup at the blessing of the elements. The whole process takes 25-30 minutes, so it is recommended that you either arrive well in advance of the service for which you are volunteering to prep communion, or that you come to the church to do this prior to Sunday morning (no earlier than the Friday before, as the wine and juice does not keep longer than three days after being poured). Communion volunteers for the 11am service ensure the communion is "reset" for the 11am service, and then put away everything after the service concludes. To volunteer and get more info about these urgently needed tasks, contact Worship Committee Chair Ryan Womack at worship@friends-ucc.org. Thank you for your generous offering of time and care for our worship community's needs.

JOIN FRIENDS! NEW MEMBER SUNDAY, December 19th: At Friends Congregational Church, membership is not about joining an institution, but about being a part of a movement of people committed to the Christ-centered work of doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God and one another. If you are interested in joining this community of faith on our next New Member Sunday, becoming a member of Friends Church in the 11am service on Sunday, December 19, contact Senior Pastor Dan De Leon at pastor@friends-ucc.org, or Associate Pastor Trent Williams at pastortrent@friends-ucc.org.

ADVENT & ANNUNCIATION – SCRIPTURE SELECTIONS FOR WORSHIP AT FRIENDS CHURCH: In her book, *The Women’s Lectionary for the Whole Church*, Dr. Wilda Gafney, Professor of Hebrew Bible at Brite Divinity School, writes, “Annunciations communicate an understanding of God involved in history and deeply involved in the lineage—ancestral and descendent—of God’s people. Mary’s annunciation and the story of Jesus’ first advent stand on that foundational understanding.” For the season of Advent and for Christmas Eve, we will delve into this theme of annunciation and the lessons they teach us as we prepare for and celebrate the coming of the Christ child. Utilizing scriptures from *The Women’s Lectionary for the Whole Church*, **the Four Sundays of Advent (Nov. 28, Dec. 5, 12, 19) and Christmas Eve** will offer us glimpses into the annunciation stories that culminate with the birth of Jesus: Hagar, Sarah, Hannah, Elizabeth, and Mary. Dr. Gafney writes, “A significant aim of this project is increased biblical literacy, beginning with scripture’s most neglected population.” After a year of learning from scriptures that took us beyond the lectionary, we stand prepped and ready to learn from these ancient, semi-familiar stories in anticipation of Christmas. As Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber writes, “Wil Gafney has offered the church a treasure in this Women’s Lectionary, and we would do well to make use of it quickly and thoroughly.” Here we go!

FRIENDS CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Our Vision:

Rooted in the way of Christ, we strive to be a community of God's radical inclusion and extravagant welcome.

Our Mission:

United by the example of Jesus, we live faithfully, love limitlessly, and serve boldly.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

9:00am In-Person – 11:00am In-Person & Online

FRIENDS CHURCH STAFF

The Rev. Dr. Dan De Leon *he/him/his*, Senior Pastor
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The Rev. Trent Williams *he/him/his*, Associate Pastor
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