



Friends Church

An Open & Affirming Congregation



La presentación de Cristo en el templo
Kelly Latimore (2018)

December 31, 2023

11:00am

WELCOME TO FRIENDS CHURCH!

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.

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 leave in the offering plate 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.

WiFi: To access church WiFi, please use this login information:
WiFi – The Promised LAN Password: stillspeaking

RESTROOMS are located through the double doors on the piano side of the sanctuary. Gender assigned restrooms are straight down at the end of the hall, and a gender neutral restroom is to the immediate right.

LEADING IN TODAY'S SERVICE:

Lay Leaders: Diane Simpson
Greeters: Doris Machinski

Next Sunday, January 7th:
Lay Leaders: Susan Fontaine & Diane Simpson
Communion Steward: Maura Ives
Greeters: Kathy Yeager & Lanette and Rick Schulte

We give God thanks for our volunteers sharing their gifts. To volunteer for a Sunday as a lay leader, communion steward, or greeter, email worship@friends-ucc.org.

COMMUNION ON REQUEST: While the sacrament of communion is observed in worship on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month at Friends, communion is available any Sunday on request. If you would like to receive communion on a 2nd, 4th, or 5th Sunday, please find one of our pastors to serve you at the conclusion of the worship service.

First Sunday after Christmas

Christmas is not just a day; it is a season! Christmas Day is the festival commemorating the birth of the Christ Child, observed primarily on December 25 among billions of people around the world. The 12 days that follow are known as the Christmas season or Christmastide.

PSALM FOR MEDITATION: Psalm 148, NRSV

And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant. Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name; indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. He has come to the aid of his child Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

QUOTE FOR MEDITATION:

“Our announcements of Christ’s birth into human history should render sufficient joy that the present circumstances cannot diminish the intrusive signs of God’s peace.”

-Joy J. Moore, Professor of Biblical Preaching, Luther Seminary

CHIMING OF THE TRINITY

WORDS OF WELCOME

Brooke Dooley

PRELUDE & LIGHTING OF THE ALTAR CANDLES

CALL TO WORSHIP

Diane Simpson

One: We have welcomed the Christ child
and declared the glory of God's salvation that comes to live among us.
And yet, still, we wait.

All: We watch and work for God's kin-dom on earth as it is in heaven.

One: We prepare to welcome a new year,
thankful for how God has brought us through the past year
and anxious to discover what the new year might bring.

All: We watch and work for God's kin-dom on earth as it is in heaven.

One: We join generations of Simeons and Annas
who learned and taught us how to listen, notice, and discern
divine love at work in the world.

All: We watch and work for God's kin-dom on earth as it is in heaven.

One: Come, let us worship God,
whose love endures from generation to generation,
guiding us from one year to the next.

**All: Come, let us worship as we live in anticipation
of God's kin-dom on earth as it is heaven. Amen.**

*OPENING HYMN: JOY TO THE WORLD

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re - ceive
 2 Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their songs
 3 No more let sins and sor - rows grow, nor thorns in - fest
 4 He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the na -

her king; let ev - ery heart pre - pare him room,
 em - ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
 the ground; he comes to make his bless - ings flow
 tions prove the glo - ries of his righ - teous - ness

and heaven and na - ture sing, and heaven and na - ture
 re - peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound - ing
 far as the curse is found, far as the curse is
 and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his
 and heaven and na - ture sing,

and
 sing, and heaven, and heaven and na - ture sing.
 joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
 found, far as, far as the curse is found.
 love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

heaven and na - ture sing,

*INVOCATION

Diane Simpson

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Mary Howell

Children in the sanctuary are invited to come to the front, and children watching online are invited to get closer to their screen. All are invited to sing a verse of NCH #524 "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 (oh let it shine)!**

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

Trent Williams

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Trent Williams

God of stars and angels, God of sheep and lambs,
God of abundance and grace:
You know us well, better than we know ourselves.
You hear us cry “Gloria!” and “Praise!”
And you watch us tear things apart with our words and deeds.
You hear us say “Thy will be done” and “Use me, O God”
And you watch us do nothing in response to cries for help.
You know us, and you love us, and you forgive.
Hear us now say, “Help us to change; turn us around,
Make us more loving and courageous and hopeful.”
This we pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF GRACE

Trent Williams

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

Trent Williams

One: The peace of Christ be with you all.
Many: **And also with you!**

*HYMN OF RESPONSE: 136 Jesus, Jesus, Oh, What a Wonderful Child

Tune: Wonderful Child

EPISTLE READING

Galatians 4:4-7, NRSV

Diane Simpson

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

SPECIAL MUSIC: In the Bleak Midwinter - Gustav Holst

arranged by Patrick M. Liebergen (Charity Stokes, contralto)

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.” And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.” There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

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

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

THE MESSAGE

Dan De Leon

MOMENT FOR REFLECTION**INVITATION TO SHARE**

Diane Simpson

OFFERTORY

Secure online giving via Realm Giving at bit.ly/givetofriendsucc
Venmo to 979-307-8860 or @friendsucc

*DOXOLOGY

Praise to God, the One who made us. Praise to Christ, God's on - ly — Son.
the new* - born

Praise the Spir - it, ev - er — with us. Praise the God - head, Three in — One.

Clear a path! Pre-pare the way! Ad - vent leads to Christ - mas Day!

* - for use of Christmas Eve or Christmas Day

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Brooke Dooley

Our Father, 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 sins as we forgive our those who sin 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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Brooke Dooley

***CLOSING HYMN #154** Go Tell It on the Mountain Tune: African-American Spiritual

***BENEDICTION**

Dan De Leon

***SONG RESPONSE**

Go, all ye faith - ful! All who know the Sav - ior.
[Go all ye faith - ful! Take the joy* of Christ - mas.]

Car - ry the mes - sage far be - yond these walls.

Hold forth the Christ - light. Con - quer ev - ry dark - ness.

Go forth, O church of Je - sus! Pro - claim the One who frees us!

Speak peace! Reach out in mer - cy, in kind - ness and love.

POSTLUDE

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Instrumental Music:

- Prelude: Joy to the World - George Frideric Handel, arranged by Victor Labenske
- Offertory: The Snow Lay on the Ground - Traditional Irish-English Carol, arranged by Joan Frey Boytim
- Postlude: Go, Tell It on the Mountain - Spiritual, arranged by Melody Bober

Scriptures for Baptism of Christ Sunday, January 7, 2024: Galatians 3:27-28; Genesis 1:1-5; Mark 1:4-11

GETTING CONNECTED AT FRIENDS

GET CONNECTED! On Fridays we email out a newsletter called “This Week at Friends” that shares important information and all of the activities and events going on at Friends. Subscribe by contacting office@friends-ucc.org.

EVENTS THIS WEEK

JACK’S JAZZ FEST: Jack’s Jazz Fest will be held December 31 from 1-4 pm at Friends Congregational Church. This event is dedicated to one of Jack’s loves, Jazz. Music was his passion and he loved learning about its history and learning to play with soulful expression. Come celebrate his life, beautiful music, participate in an art contest, a gumbo cook off, and learn from a living museum. There will be crafts, games, music, and more. There will be a silent auction, with 100% of the proceeds benefitting the youth group’s summer mission trip. 28% of the t-shirt profits will benefit Wellborn Middle School Jazz Band Club. 100% of the fun will help keep his memory alive and spread awareness about the importance of mental and physical health. Visit our social media or text 979-204-5517 for more information or to sign up for the gumbo cook off or art contest. You may also purchase a t-shirt in advance for \$15 via text or at the event.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

VOLUNTEER VOICES NEEDED FOR FRIENDS CHURCH PODCAST: Our new weekly podcast, featuring the messages from Sunday worship services, is introduced by Friends Church members giving a brief testimony of what Friends Church means to them. To volunteer to introduce an episode, contact A/V Tech Jeremy Dudo at av@friends-ucc.org.

9AM SERVICES AND SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH RESUME NEXT WEEK: The 9am worship service and 10am Sunday School classes for children and youth, K-12 were not offered this morning. Both the 9am service and Sunday School classes resume next Sunday, January 7.

SENIOR PASTOR OUT OF THE OFFICE: Pastor Dan will be away from the church Jan. 7-11 attending the Conversations retreat for United Church of Christ senior pastors of multi-staff congregations. If you have a pastoral need during that time, please contact Pastor Brooke or Pastor Trent.

CONFIRMATION ANNOUNCEMENT: For the past few weeks there has been an interest request for Spring 2024 Confirmation. Confirmation at Friends Church is an opportunity for youth grades 6-12 to engage in lessons related to the Christian tradition, Bible studies, mentorship, and field trips to local faith communities. Confirmation runs from early January to Pentecost Sunday in May. It is not a requirement to be baptized in order to pursue the rite of Confirmation, rather, it is a chance for our youth to say “yes” to where they are on their faith journey, and for the congregation to reiterate our support as they grow and learn in their faith. We are planning to postpone classes until Spring 2025. If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Brooke.

CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED: The church office will be closed Monday (January 1) for New Years Day. Normal business hours will resume on Tuesday (January 2).

OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE AND SHARE

CROCKETT ELEMENTARY BOOK FAIR: Last year our free Book Fair at Crockett Elementary School in Bryan was a great success. Each child received three books to keep. Even the teachers were able to pick two books for themselves. We are doing it again this spring, so it's time to collect books! You can donate books by placing them in the box outside the office, or you can donate gift cards or money, and we will buy books with your donations. If you have questions, please contact Jodie Robinson (jocelinbrune@gmail.com) or Pam Engler (penglertx@gmail.com). Thank you!

SHARE YOUR TIME AND TALENTS: There are plenty of opportunities for you to share your time and talents both here at the church and in the community.

Greeters and Communion Stewards Needed: If you can help with a 9am Sunday service or two, please contact Worship Committee Chair Ryan Womack: worship@friends-ucc.org.

Youth Group Looking for Extra Help: We are still looking for volunteers to help with remaining Youth Group events for the fall, including lessons, and a Christmas party. Contact Pastor Brooke at pastorbrooke@friend-ucc.org.

Sunday School Teachers Needed: Are you feeling called to teach our children or youth? Contact Pastor Dan for more information: pastor@friends-ucc.org.

Coffee Crew/Kitchen Angel: Volunteer once or multiple times to prepare the coffee for the 9am or the 11am service. Contact fellowship@friends-ucc.org.

Be a Curbside Steward: Recycling occurs once every two weeks early on Fridays and trash pick-up is weekly, early on Mondays. Bins need to be placed at the curb the afternoon or evening before the scheduled pick up day and returned to the side of the church after pick-up. Contact Property@Friends-ucc.org

Serve the Community: Help out at the Brazos Church Food Pantry, the Friday food distribution at Peace Lutheran, or Brazos Interfaith Immigration Network (BIIN) as an English or citizenship class tutor. And more! Visit the Friends Church website (Friends-ucc.org) ▶ Get **Involved** ▶ **Volunteer** or email office@friends-ucc.org for more information or to volunteer.

SAVE THE DATE

FIRST FRIDAY WITH FRIENDS: Please join us for craft ales and fellowship at Blackwater Draw, 701 N Main St, Bryan, for a nice post-holiday wind-down. Non-alcoholic drinks also available, and a food truck will be on-site from 6.30pm. Jon Taute will be grabbing one of the large tables in the back room for Friends Church.

Friends Congregational Church United Church of Christ

Vision:

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

Mission:

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

Friends Church Staff

Senior Pastor

The Rev. Dr. Dan De Leon (*he, him*)
pastor@friends-ucc.org

Director of Music Ministries

Chris Hoffman (*he, him*)
choir@friends-ucc.org

Executive Pastor

The Rev. Trent Williams (*he, him*)
pastortrent@friends-ucc.org

Associate Pastor to Youth & Young Adults

The Rev. Brooke Dooley (*she, her, they, them*)
pastorbrooke@friends-ucc.org

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