FRIENDS
CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH

An Open & Affirming Congregation

Christ in the Synagogue, by Nikolaĭ Nikolaevich Ge, 1868 (Russia)

January 23, 2022
9:00am & 11:00am

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 after Epiphany:

Epiphany is the Season of Light, when we remember the revelation of Jesus as the beloved Child of God, while recognizing the lengthening of the days and the growing of the light.
The spirit and the charge of Epiphany is spoken by Jesus in Mark 4:21-23, "Does anyone bring in a lamp in order to put it under a basket or a bed? Shouldn't it be placed on a lampstand? Everything hidden will be revealed, and everything secret will come out into the open. Whoever has ears to listen should pay attention!"

Words in **BOLD** are yours to speak out loud **You are invited to stand

SCRIPTURE FOR MEDITATION: 1 Timothy 4:1-6, 9-10, CEB
The Spirit clearly says that in latter times some people will turn away from the faith. They will pay attention to spirits that deceive and to the teaching of demons. They will be controlled by the pretense of lying, and their own consciences will be seared. They will prohibit marriage and eating foods that God created—and he intended them to be accepted with thanksgiving by those who are faithful and have come to know the truth. Everything that has been created by God is good, and nothing that is received with thanksgiving should be rejected. These things are made holy by God's word and prayer. If you point these things out to the believers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus who has been trained by the words of faith and the good teaching that you've carefully followed.

This saying is reliable and deserves complete acceptance. We work and struggle for this: "Our hope is set on the living God, who is the savior of all people, especially those who believe."

CHIMING OF THE TRINITY

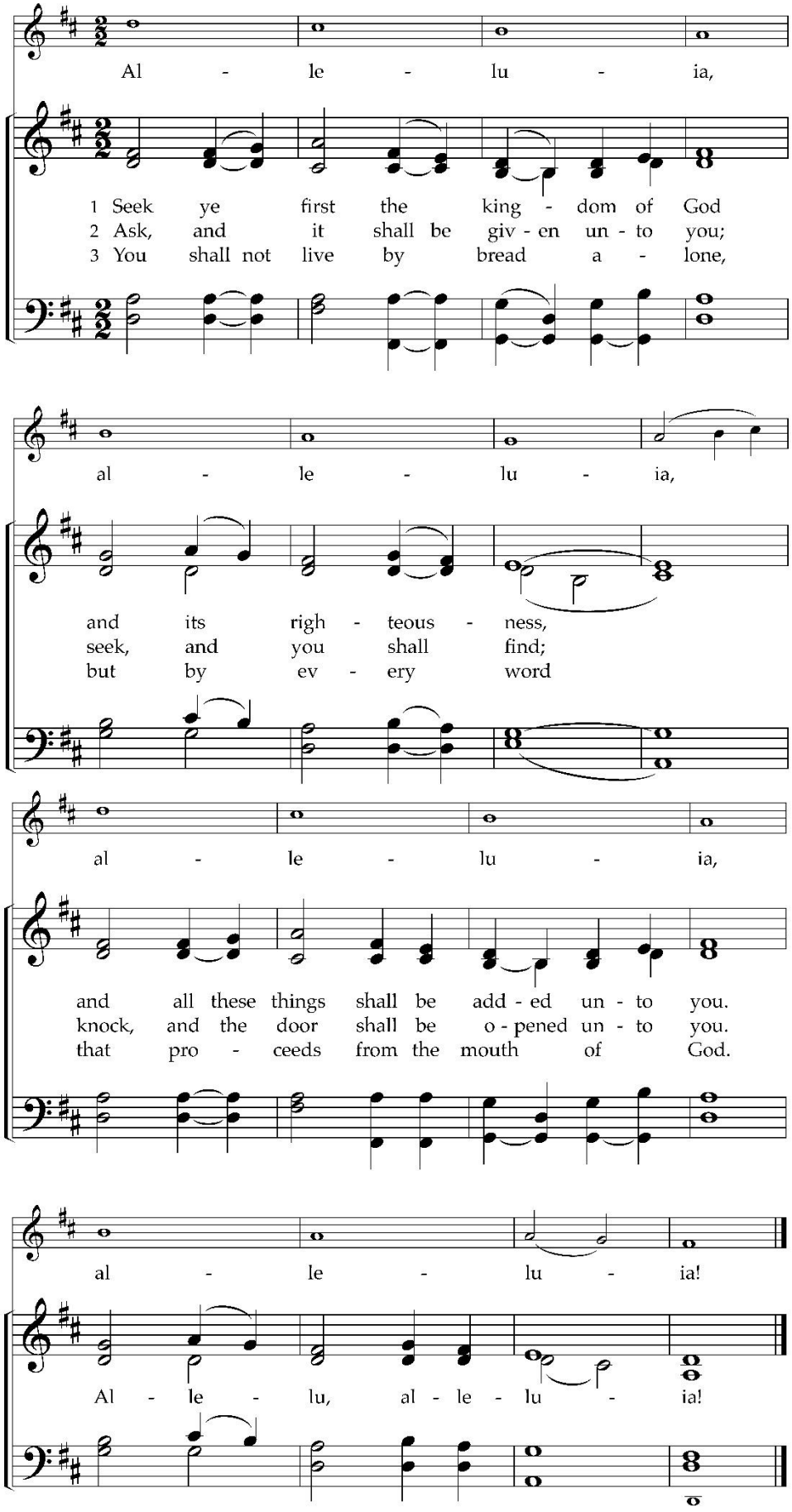
WORDS OF WELCOME — Brooke Dooley

PRELUDE & LIGHTING OF THE ALTAR CANDLES

**CALL TO WORSHIP — Holly Bentley (9:00) / Kenny Wiley (11:00)

One: The Spirit of God is upon us.
All: We are called to be God's people.
One: The Spirit of God is upon us.
All: We are called to be the body of Christ.
One: Come let us worship God,
All: who binds us together in love and service.

OPENING HYMN – No.175 – Seek Ye First



*INVOCATION: Holly Bentley (9:00)
Kenny Wiley (11:00)

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE Trent Williams

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. 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 (oh let it shine)!

INVITATION TO CONFESSION Brooke Dooley

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (**RESPONSIVE**) Brooke Dooley

One: Waiting God, you know us all too well. Today we listen to an episode in the life of Jesus where we hear the astonishment of the people gathered in worship as Jesus proclaims the mandate and scope of his ministry. It is what they had hoped for and also what they have feared.

All: Change and challenge are always difficult. We are more inclined to turn our backs on opportunities of service than pitch in to affect the needed changes that will promote healing and wholeness. Forgive us when we give lip service to you and then slip into inaction. Give us courage to be willing disciples. Help us to be people of promise and hope. In Jesus' Name, amen.

SILENT PRAYER AND MEDITATION
The sound of one chime will calls us into silent prayer and meditation, and two chimes will call us out.

ASSURANCE OF GRACE

PASSING OF THE PEACE Brooke Dooley

HEBREW SCRIPTURE READING: Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10, NRSV Holly Bentley (9:00)
Kenny Wiley (11:00)

All the people gathered together into the square before the Water Gate. They told the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had given to Israel. Accordingly, the priest Ezra brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could

hear with understanding. This was on the first day of the seventh month. He read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law.

And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. Then Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, 'Amen, Amen', lifting up their hands. Then they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

So they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, 'This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep.' For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. Then he said to them, 'Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our Lord; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.'

*SPECIAL MUSIC (9AM)
Ain't that Good News – arranged by Moses Hogan (Tami Dudo, soprano)

*CHORAL ANTHEM (11AM)
Ain't that Good News – arranged by Moses Hogan

GOSPEL READING: Luke 4:14-21, CEB Dan De Leon

Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news about him spread throughout the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been raised. On the Sabbath he went to the synagogue as he normally did and stood up to read. The synagogue assistant gave him the scroll from the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me.
He has sent me to preach good news to the poor,
to proclaim release to the prisoners
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to liberate the oppressed,
and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the synagogue assistant, and sat down. Every eye in the synagogue was fixed on him. He began to explain to them, "Today, this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it."

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

OFFERTORY INVITATION — Holly Bentley (9:00)
Kenny Wiley (11:00)

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

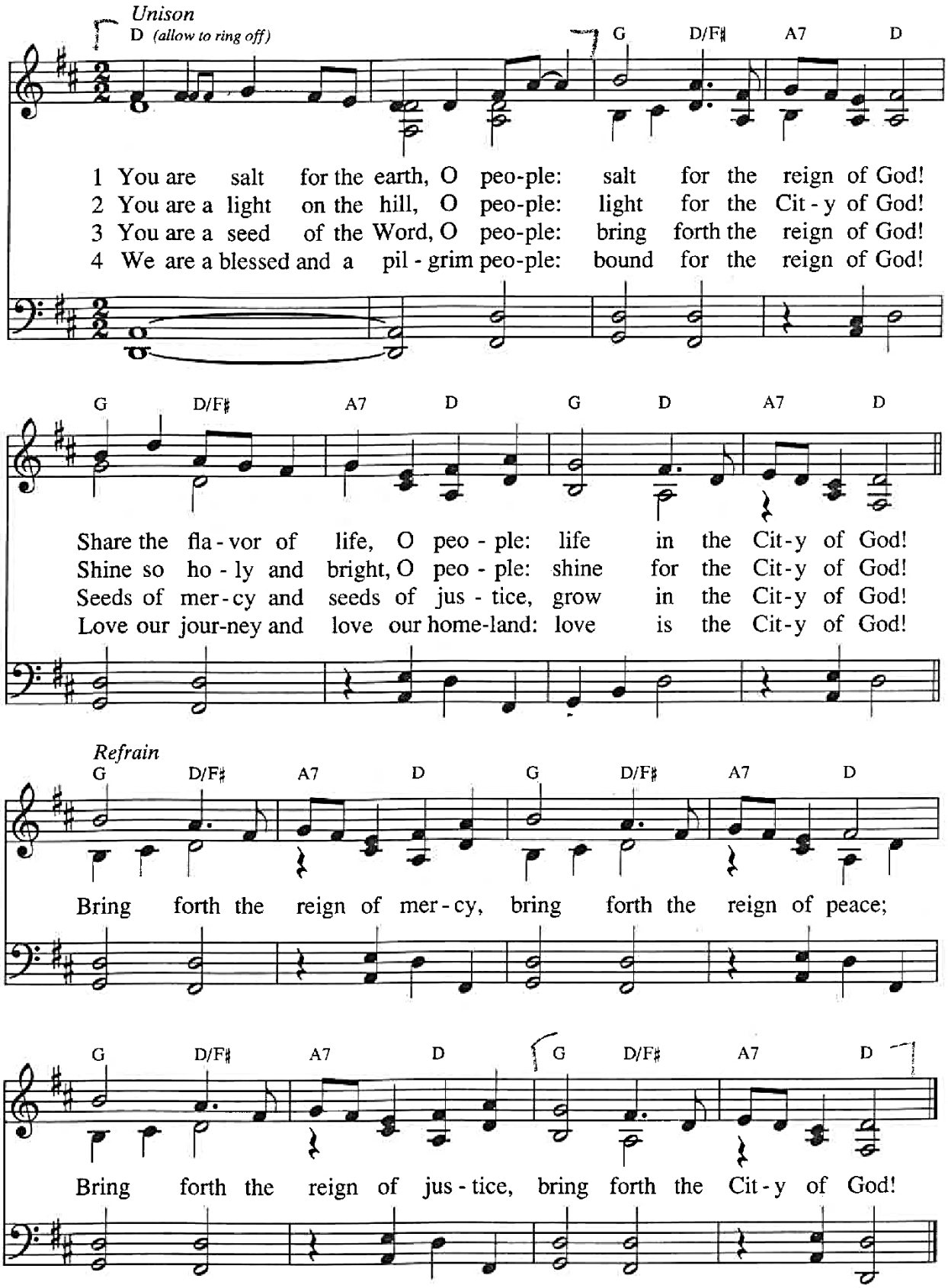
Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise God all creatures here below: alleluia, alleluia!
Praise God the source of all our gifts,
Praise Jesus Christ whose power uplifits,
Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit,
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

PRAYER OF DEDICATION & THE LORD'S PRAYER (UNISON) — Trent Williams

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 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 – No. 181 – You are the Salt for the Earth, O People NCH



BENEDICTION Dan De Leon

POSTLUDE

Hymns reprinted with permission —

Instrumental Music:

Prelude: *Rejoice and Sing – Eugene Butler*

Offertory: *A Meditation on "O God, Our Help in Ages Past" – Mark Albrecht*

Postlude: *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty – Melody Bober*

***Scriptures for January 30**: Psalm 33:11-22; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, Luke 4:21-30*

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.

FRIENDS CHURCH FOOD DISTRIBUTION AT PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH: Pastor Trent reminded us in the first message of the year: "When you find someone in need, welcome them." If you would like to make that request come true, join members of Friends Church in the parking lot at Peace Lutheran this Friday (and every Friday) between 3:00 and 6:00 pm to assist in the distribution of food from the Brazos Valley Food Bank. Did you know that during 2021 we distributed food 53 times and touched the lives of 12,902 children and adults by providing them with fresh fruits and vegetables? Send questions on how to get involved to awehrly@suddenlink.net.

SOCIAL JUSTICE CLASS - Sundays 10am: The Social Justice class currently meets in the music library between the two services. This room is located next to the gender-neutral restroom and the childcare room. We use the UCC Still Speaking Daily Devotional that you can sign up for at *https://www.ucc.org/daily-devotional/*. It comes to your inbox daily, and each Sunday a volunteer reads one that was meaningful to them that week and this sparks our group discussion. We hope you consider joining us!

FRIENDS YOUTH CAMPAIGN TO FORGIVE MEDICAL DEBT: Last summer, Friends Youth spent their week-long mission trip engaging in local service projects and learning about systemic injustice, one being medical debt in the United States. An estimated **43 million people in the U.S. are struggling with medical debt** (that number exceeds the population of Canada). Medical debt is also the **#1 reason people file for bankruptcy**. Friends UCC Youth

is partnering with RIP Medical Debt to forgive medical debt in the Brazos Valley and other surrounding counties in Texas.

This is how it works. RIP Medical Debt buys portfolios of debt at a fraction of the cost, and the program benefits families whose incomes are 2x below the poverty level, whose debts exceed 5% of their income. **Every dollar donated eliminates $100 in medical debt.** The campaign spans four months and we are looking to wrap up our campaign around Easter of 2022. Together with other local faith communities, and a fundraising goal of $30,000, we hope to wipe out $3,000,000 in medical debt.

Check out our campaign page to be part of this movement!
https://ripmedicaldebt.org/campaign/brazos-valley-medical-debt-forgiveness
For more information contact Brooke Dooley at pastoralintern@friends-ucc.org

CHURCH SAFETY: As we get back to joining together inside our church building, we need to work together to keep our building "clutter free" so that everyone feels the beauty of our church. This also helps improve safety by having our hallways clear in case of the need for a quick exit. If you have used an item and do not know where it belongs, please ask for help instead of leaving it out. Thanks!

A WORD OF THANKS FROM PASTOR DAN AFTER THE OCCASION OF HIS 20TH ORDINATION ANNIVERSARY: Friends Church Family, I was surprised in the 9am and 11am services last Sunday, January 16, when Trent asked me to come forward during the announcements. I was even more surprised when he pointed out that the flowers on the Advent wreath stand were there in honor of my ordination anniversary. I was more surprised, still, when Brooke and Trent read a letter on behalf of our denomination from General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ, Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer, congratulating me on 20 years of ordained ministry. In the 11am service, I was gifted with a collection of letters from clergy colleagues, friends, and mentors, some of whom I keep up with regularly, and others with whom I had not communicated for some time, each affirming my calling to serve in ordained ministry. Then we sang one of my favorite hymns, "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee," because Chris remembered that it was the opening hymn sung at my ordination service on January 20, 2002, while I processed in with all the clergy who participated in that service. Last Sunday, I was so surprised and joyfully overwhelmed that I didn't know how to respond, especially with a mask covering my facial expressions in response to the moment. That afternoon, after reading those letters solicited in secret by Trent, Brooke, Moderator Cathy Hansen, my mom, and my beloved partner Stacy, I kicked myself for not jumping up and down and raising my fists to celebrate the fact that I'd made it to 20 years of being an ordained minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and "grace hath brought me safe thus far." I have so much to reflect on and share, but what I want to say here is THANK YOU. Thank you, Friends Church, for being the place where and the people with whom I have had the privilege to strengthen and share more than 16 of those 20 years in service to the Gospel and the Church, of which Christ is head. I thank my God every time I remember you, and I'm particularly grateful for you and to you on the occasion of this golden

anniversary that I never would have imagined reaching when I first said "yes" to this odd and wondrous calling. In Gratitude and Faith - Rev. Dr. Dan De Leon, Senior Pastor

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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