



Friends Church
An Open & Affirming Congregation



Interior of the Church of the Light
Tadao Ando (1999)

March 10, 2024
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: Anne Nichols & Tyler Baker-Wilkinson
Greeters: Kathy Yeager & Lanette and Rick Schulte

Next Sunday, March 17
Lay Leaders: Cathy Hansen & Dwight Baker
Communion Stewards:
Greeters: Maura Ives & Doris Machinski

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.

Fourth Sunday in Lent

Lent, from the Latin quadragesima, 'fortieth,' is a penitential season of preparation for Easter commemorating the 40 days Jesus spent fasting in the desert and enduring temptation before beginning his public ministry. In Western churches, Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, six and a half weeks before Easter, and is marked by fasting, prayer, charity, and self-reflection on our discipleship with Christ.

QUOTE FOR MEDITATION:

“When did a verse about the extravagant and self-giving love of God become about exclusion and violence? When? Well, basically as soon as it was heard by sinners.”

-Nadia Bolz-Weber

CHIMING OF THE TRINITY

WORDS OF WELCOME

Trent Williams

PRELUDE & LIGHTING OF THE ALTAR CANDLES

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

Tyler Baker-Wilkinson

One: In this place, the community of faith is reminded of the promise:

All: God's love endures forever!

One: In spite of our impatient grumbling, despite our attraction to the shadows:

All: Christ's light shines in us!

One: When we think our hands are empty, when we have no music in our souls:

All: the Spirit fills us with glad songs and creates us for good works!

***OPENING HYMN - #476 My Life Flows on in Endless Song**

Tune: Endless Song

***INVOCATION**

Tyler Baker-Wilkinson

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Trent Williams

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 #525 "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.**

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY HIGHLIGHTS

Abby Burley

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

Trent Williams

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (UNISON)

Trent Williams

Almighty God,

You have set before us the path, but we have wandered on our own.

Sometimes we are like toddlers, and we hear your call and come back.

**Other times, we are children testing boundaries,
ignoring your call until fear finally makes us look back.**

And still other times we are full of youthful rebellion,

demanding to be cut loose and set free,

not knowing how much we still need to seek your wisdom and guidance.

Too often we think we are adults and know our own way,

only to stumble and stray so far.

Remind us, parental God, that we are always your children,

that we are never fully grown up in your sight,

that we always have much to learn.

Help us to seek you every day,

to acknowledge that we need Your wisdom and guidance,

and help us to return to the path with you.

In the name of Christ, who is our companion on this journey of faith, we pray. 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 - I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

Tune: Houston

1 I want to walk as a child of the light. I want to fol - low
2 I want to see the bright-ness of God. I want to look at
3 I'm look-ing for the com - ing of Christ. I want to be with

Je - sus. God set the stars to give light to the world. The
Je - sus. Clear Sun of righ-teous-ness, shine on my path, and
Je - sus. When we have run with pa-tience the race, we

Refrain

star of my life is Je - sus.
show me the way to the Fa - ther. In him there is no dark-ness at
shall know the joy of Je - sus.

all. The night and the day are both a - like. The Lamb is the

light of the cit - y of God. Shine in my heart, Lord Je - sus.

EPISTLE READING

Ephesians 2:1-10 CEB

Tyler Baker-Wilkinson

At one time you were like a dead person because of the things you did wrong and your offenses against God. You used to live like people of this world. You followed the rule of a destructive spiritual power. This is the spirit of disobedience to God's will that is now at work in persons whose lives are characterized by disobedience. At one time you were like those persons. All of you used to do whatever felt good and whatever you thought you wanted so that you were children headed for punishment just like everyone else.

However, God is rich in mercy. He brought us to life with Christ while we were dead as a result of those things that we did wrong. He did this because of the great love that he has for us. You are saved by God's grace! And God raised us up and seated us in the heavens with Christ Jesus. God did this to show future generations the greatness of his grace by the goodness that God has shown us in Christ Jesus.

You are saved by God's grace because of your faith. This salvation is God's gift. It's not something you possessed. It's not something you did that you can be proud of. Instead, we are God's accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives.

HANDBELL ANTHEM: Agnus Dei - Georges Bizet and Ernest Guirard, arranged by Martha Lynn Thompson

SECOND READING

John 3:14-21, NRSV

Brooke Dooley

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."

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

Tyler Baker-Wilkinson

OFFERTORY

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

***DOXOLOGY**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God for all that love has done;
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One. Amen

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION & THE LORD'S PRAYER**

Trent Williams

Eternal Spirit,
Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name echoes through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world!
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom
sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and testing, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.

For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
now and forever. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Brooke Dooley

BLESSING OF THE COURTS & PORTS MISSIONERS

Trent Williams

***CLOSING HYMN #208** God Loved the World

Tune: Rockingham

***BENEDICTION**

Brooke Dooley

POSTLUDE

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Instrumental Music:

Prelude: How Can I Keep from Singing- Rev. Robert Lowry

Offertory: God So Loved the World - John Stainer

Postlude: I Will Arise and Go to Jesus - Traditional American Melody, arranged by Mary McDonald

Scriptures for Fifth Sunday in Lent, March 17, 2024: Psalm 119:9-16; Jeremiah 31:31-34; John 12:20-33

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

LENTEN MORNING MEDITATION, MARCH 12: On Tuesdays during Lent, you are invited to the Friends Church sanctuary to start your morning with centering meditation. At 7:30am on Tuesdays, Mar. 12th, 19th and 26th, we gather for a brief introduction, followed by silent meditation, and follow-up conversation as time permits. Start to finish, this lasts between 35 and 45 minutes, hopefully allowing for those of us with work, school, and other obligations to get where we need to be on time. We are excited about this series of morning meditations that will bring us together in self- and community-preparation for Easter.

LENTEN MIDDAY RECITAL SERIES, MARCH 13: Join us for a series of Lenten Midday Recitals, featuring the talents of our wonderful musicians of Friends Church! Bring your own lunch for fellowship beginning at 11:30 am, and stay for a 20-30 minute program, beginning at 12:00, of music selected by our gifted musicians. A variety of music - sacred, musical theatre, classical, and pop - will be performed each week. Recital dates include March 13, and 20. We hope you can take time out from these busy weeks to relax and enjoy great music.

EASTER DONATIONS NEEDED, MARCH 17: Donations for the Easter Egg Hunt are needed! We need candy, non-food items (ex; stickers, bracelets, etc.) but NOT chocolate. Donations are needed by the 17th, so that the Youth group has time to stuff eggs before Easter. There will be containers to hold your candy donations in the narthex and in front of the church office. Thank you!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FROM THE SENIOR PASTORAL RELATIONS TEAM: SABBATICAL FOR SENIOR PASTOR, APRIL 1 – JULY 15: The day after Easter, Pastor Dan will begin a three-and-a-half-month sabbatical. During this time of intentional rest, reflection, and renewal, he will step away from all pastoral duties to travel, recharge, grow, and gain fresh perspectives. Pastor Dan's absence will also create space for Pastors Trent and Brooke to grow and flourish as they take on some of his responsibilities for a time. This sabbatical also demonstrates the importance of rest and self-care for all of us. As a congregation, we can support Pastor Dan during this sabbatical by praying for his well-being and continuing to engage with and support the ministries of Friends Church, while eagerly anticipating the wisdom and inspiration he'll bring back to us. With hope, this intentional season of rest will bear fruit for years to come.

FINANCIAL UPDATE: For those who are interested in a follow-up from the Congregational Meeting in December, please read the letter from Moderator Jackie Womack at <https://bit.ly/43atksE>

SENIOR PASTOR AWAY, MARCH 10 & 13-15: Pastor Dan will be on family vacation March 10 and 13-15. If you have a pastoral need during that time, contact Pastor Trent or Pastor Brooke.

JUST ONE THING, MARCH 17: Last Sunday, we gave everyone a chance to pick "Just One Thing" that you can do to give back to our community. It takes all of us to make our vision of an extravagant welcome come to life. What's the one thing you can do to serve our church family and make that vision a reality? You'll have an opportunity to fill out a paper form during next week's worship services, where you can select something to offer this spring -- you can volunteer just one time, occasionally, or regularly. All commitments are welcome! We will reach out with details.

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. Contact Jodie Robinson (jocelin-brune@gmail.com) or Pam Engler (penglertx@gmail.com). Thank you!

SUPPORT OUR PODCAST: The “Friends Congregational Church Sermons” podcast is getting downloads across the country and even overseas! Each episode, featuring a sermon and introduced by a different church member, is an evangelism and outreach tool for all of us at Friends. Support the podcast by sharing it widely. So far the record number of downloads for an episode is 69. With your help we can hit at least 100 every week! You can also support the podcast by lending your voice to it. Contact A/V Tech Jeremy Dudo to record the intro for an episode: av@friends-ucc.org.

Be a Greeter and Communion Steward: To help in the 9am and 11am services, 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 the Youth Group events for the new year, including the June Mission Trip. Contact Pastor Brooke at pastor-brooke@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: Do you enjoy having coffee/hot beverages available at Sunday morning services? Signup via sheet on counter in kitchen, or Sign-up Genius (link provided in Friday church email) or by contacting [Fellowship@ friends-ucc.org](mailto:Fellowship@friends-ucc.org). Training available by request.

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

“BROKEN”: REAL LIFE AND REAL FAITH, MARCH 19: On March 19th, we will gather in the sanctuary at 6:30pm to watch episode 5 of the 2017 BBC drama series “Broken” and have conversation about how faith and real life intersect. Even if you can’t make every week, you are welcome to attend, and can view the episodes you might have missed on Amazon Prime or Britbox. Please be advised that the themes can be intense, including suicidal ideation and the inter section of race and police violence. Contact Pastor Trent if you have any questions.

THEOLOGY ON TAP, MARCH 21: At 6pm on March 21st, Theology on Tap (T.o.T.) is held at KinderHill Brew Lab, 800 S. Bryan Ave. T.o.T.’s informal discussions bring our lives more in tune with God’s will and way as we get to know each other better beyond church walls. The venue has an assortment of great beers on tap. You don’t need to be fond of beer to join us, nor do you have to be 21 or older. Non-alcoholic beverages are available, and minors are welcome, as are four-leggeds. Cheers, and amen!

B.Y.O.F. FOR PALM SUNDAY, MARCH 24: On Palm/Passion Sunday, we celebrate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Like many churches, we celebrate this story by waving palm branches and singing in our worship services. But to really get into the story in our context, what do we have nearby that we would wave in celebration today? Maybe you have yaupon lining your yard, oak trees, or Texas wildflowers. For Palm/Passion Sunday, March 24, you're encouraged to BYOF (bring your own fronds) to church and wave whatever you may have in your yard (except, of course, poison ivy). And if you would prefer to stay with traditional palms, we will have those available as well.

NEW MEMBER SUNDAY, 3/24: March 24 is our next New Member Sunday, when we welcome our newest members into the life of Friends Congregational Church. If you are interested in joining Friends on that Sunday, please contact Senior Pastor Dan De Leon (pastor@friends-ucc.org), Executive Pastor Trent Williams (pastortrent@friends-ucc.org), or Associate Pastor Brooke Dooley (pastorbrooke@friends-ucc.org).

HISTORY IN HEARNE TRIP, MARCH 28: Visit the Hearne Railroad Depot and Museum, lunch at local restaurant and then on to tour Camp Hearne WWII Historic Site and Exhibit on March 28 from 10:30-4:00. What else do I need to know? Meet at church and carpool; Lunch is on-your-own; museum and exhibits are free but donations are welcome. For assistance with transportation or lunch costs, contact Kristin Harper. RSVP by March 25.



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

Administrative Assistant

Michael Rangel (*he, him*)
office@friends-ucc.org

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www.friends-ucc.org • Office Hours: Monday–Friday, 9:00–3:00
Pastor Dan's weekday off is Friday. Pastor Trent's weekday off is Monday.