



Saul Riding to Damascus Frank Wesley

> May 4, 2025 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 & Kathy Miller Communion Stewards: Carolyn Young Greeters: Doris Machinski & Lanette and Rick Schulte

Next Sunday, May 11: Lay Leaders: Kathy Yeager & Larry Dooley Greeters: Carolyn Young & Becky Bordovsky and Carol Wilson

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.

### Eastertide - Third Sunday in Easter

Easter is not just one day—it's a whole season. Throughout these 50 days, we celebrate and ponder the mystery of the resurrection and the promise of new life.

#### Scripture for Meditation: Psalm 30, NRSV

I will exalt you, Lord, for you lifted me out of the depths and did not let my enemies gloat over me. Lord my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me. You, Lord, brought me up from the realm of the dead; you spared me from going down to the pit. Sing the praises of the Lord, you his faithful people; praise his holy name. For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. When I felt secure, I said, "I will never be shaken." Lord, when you favored me, you made my royal mountain stand firm; but when you hid your face, I was dismayed. To you, Lord, I called; to the Lord I cried for mercy: "What is gained if I am silenced, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it proclaim your faithfulness? Hear, Lord, and be merciful to me; Lord, be my help." You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent. Lord my God, I will praise you forever.

#### **QUOTE FOR MEDITATION:**

"Our religion can 'hell-ify' us by inspiring in us an impenetrable sense of rightness or even superiority. 'Our religion is right,' we believe, 'which makes us right.' As a result, the more devoted we are, the more stubborn and unteachable we become. And everyone can see it but us, because we're blinded by our sincerity and zeal." —Brian McLaren

"I feel the good in you, the conflict." -Luke Skywalker

#### Chiming of the Trinity

#### Words of Welcome

#### **Prelude & Lighting of the Altar Candles**

#### \*Call to Worship

- One: Here is the honest call, the holy invitation, the sacred task of our lives:
- All: To seek and be sought by Love
- One: When we betray Love out of fear or greed or shame
- All: Love calls us to account. Love looks us in the face. Love asks us to tend and mend and repair. Love cherishes and guides us and fills our hearts with courage!
- One: We belong to Love!
- All: Let us listen for Love's message.

An asterisk\* indicates that the congregation is invited to stand in body or spirit.

Kathy Miller

Brooke Dooley

**\*OPENING HYMN** - I, the Lord of Sea and Sky (Here I Am, Lord)

Here I Am



\*INVOCATION

Kathy Miller

#### Brooke Dooley

#### CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Children in the sanctuary are invited to come to the front. 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.

STEWARDSHIP MOMENTBob & Kathy RichersInvitation to ConfessionTrent WilliamsPrayer of Confession (Responsive)Trent Williams

- One: God of Forgiveness, Who provides us with grace upon grace, hear now the confession of our sins.
- All: Our greed and our temptations toward power create enemies where we should find friends. We fail to offer comfort and aid to those who are afraid and beat down by the burdens of life. We are as blind in spirit as Saul to the pain and the destruction of our wrongdoings and our well-meaning crusades. Forgive us, merciful One. Give us sight to see with your eyes, that we may bring hope and peace to our world. Amen.

#### WORDS OF ASSURANCE

#### \*Passing of the Peace

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

Trent Williams

Trent Williams



FIRST SCRIPTURE READING

Acts 9:1-9, CEB

Kathy Miller

Meanwhile, Saul was still spewing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest, seeking letters to the synagogues in Damascus. If he found persons who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, these letters would authorize him to take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. During the journey, as he approached Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven encircled him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice asking him, "Saul, Saul, why are you harassing me?"

Saul asked, "Who are you, Lord?"

"I am Jesus, whom you are harassing," came the reply. "Now get up and enter the city. You will be told what you must do."

Those traveling with him stood there speechless; they heard the voice but saw no one. After they picked Saul up from the ground, he opened his eyes but he couldn't see. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind and neither ate nor drank anything. CHORAL ANTHEM: From the Rising to the Setting of the Sun - David Lantz III

From the rising to the setting of the sun, we will sing Your praise and join our hearts as one. We stand to bless Your holy Name, we lift our hands, Your praise proclaim from the rising to the setting of the sun.

With the rising of the sun, most Holy Lord, we will sing to You our morning song of praise. For comfort through the dark of night, Your presence in the morning light, for hope renewed and wrongs made right, we praise You, Lord.

We praise You, Lord, we praise yYou, Lord, from the rising to the setting of the sun. We thank You, Lord, we thank You, Lord, from the rising to the setting of the sun.

With the setting of the sun, most holy Lord, we will sing to You our evensong of praise for health and strength throughout the day, Your guiding hand along the way, for hearing us each time we pray, we thank You, Lord. From the rising to the setting of the sun, we sing Your praise.

#### Second Scripture Reading

Acts 9:10-20, CEB Dan De Leon

In Damascus there was a certain disciple named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, "Ananias!"

He answered, "Yes, Lord."

The Lord instructed him, "Go to Judas' house on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias enter and put his hands on him to restore his sight."

Ananias countered, "Lord, I have heard many reports about this man. People say he has done horrible things to your holy people in Jerusalem. He's here with authority from the chief priests to arrest everyone who calls on your name."

The Lord replied, "Go! This man is the agent I have chosen to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and Israelites. I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."

Ananias went to the house. He placed his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord sent me—Jesus, who appeared to you on the way as you were coming here. He sent me so that you could see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Instantly, flakes fell from Saul's eyes and he could see again. He got up and was baptized. After eating, he regained his strength.

He stayed with the disciples in Damascus for several days. Right away, he began to preach about Jesus in the synagogues. "He is God's Son," he declared.

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

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

#### **MOMENT FOR REFLECTION**

#### **INVITATION TO SHARE**

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: 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** 

Faithful One, thank you for never giving up on us. For calling us back to ourselves when we stray. For holding our feet to Love's fire. For confronting us with truths that set us free. For believing in what we can do together when we are honest and accountable. In gratitude, we bring these gifts to you. Amen.

Observance of Holy Communion	Brooke Dooley
*The Lord's Prayer	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.	
Anouncements	Trent Williams
*CLOSING HYMN - No. 493 O Jesus, I Have Promised	Angel's Story
*Benediction	Dan De Leon

Kathy Miller

Brooke Dooley

**\*SUNG RESPONSE** - No. 181 You Are Salt for the Earth, O People (Verse 2 only)

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Bring Forth
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#### Postlude

Music:
Come, Christians, Join to Sing - Spanish Melody, arranged by Matt Limbaugh
Sonata for Clarinet and Piano, III. Allegro con fuoco - Francis Poulenc
(Oliver Beer, clarinet)
Clair de lune - Claude Debussy (lan Beer, piano)
The Imperial March (Darth Vader's Theme) from <i>Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back</i> - John Williams

Scriptures for Fourth Sunday of Easter, May 11, 2025: John 10:22-30; Acts 9:36-43

### **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**

**INQUIRE + CONNECT, MAY 4:** After the 11am service on May 4th, at the Inquire Class you will learn about Friends—our history, our community, our opportunities for engagement—from church members and one of our pastors. The Inquire Class concludes with an invitation to participate in an optional follow-up Connect Class offered in the home of a church member. In the Connect Class you will learn more about the vision and mission of Friends Church, and how you can "connect" with our various opportunities for nurturing your spirituality, seeking social justice, and getting more involved in the life of our community of faith. For more information and to sign up for Inquire + Connect, contact Becky Burks at spirit\_devlop@friends-ucc.org.

**CONFIRMATION FIELD TRIP TO CONGREGATION BETH SHALOM, MAY 4:** As the Youth Group's 2025 Confirmation class continues to visit different faith communities in B/CS as part of their journey, their next trip will be to Congregation Beth Shalom, our local Reform Temple. Youth will get an opportunity to observe and learn about our Jewish neighbors, and how we can best support our local community. This opportunity is open to all youth, regardless of confirmation status. Contact Pastor Brooke for questions: pastorbrooke@friends-ucc.org.

**GUYZ BREAKFAST, MAY 10:** Guyz Breakfast brings together fellowship, fun and great food. Join us at the church on the second Saturday of the month 9:00 to 10:30 a.m. Bring your favorite breakfast food or drink to share. Pancakes and coffee are provided. **OFFERING OF LETTERS, MAY 4 & 18:** Fight against funding cuts to hunger relief programs by writing letters to our local US Congressional Representative, Michael McCaul. Together with our friends at First Christian Church, Bryan, Friends Church will work with Bread for the World, a Christian organization that advocates for policies and programs to end worldwide hunger, by participating in their Offering of Letters campaign. On Sunday, May 4, at First Christian Church, Bryan, after their 10:45am worship service, all are welcome to write letters. You can also write letters on Sunday, May 18, at Friends Church, after our 9am and 11am services. Letter-writing materials, sample letters, and guidelines will be provided. Alternatively, you may bring a prepared letter to Friends Church by June 1. Letters from our churches will be combined with those from other local churches to be delivered to Rep. McCaul's College Station office.

**EVANGELISM & OUTREACH COMMITTEE MEETING, MAY 5:** You're Invited! The Evangelism and Outreach committee will meet Monday, May 5 at 4 pm at the Church to talk about the First Friday Pride in June plus some other things. If you have any thoughts or questions leading up to the meeting, please contact Megan Alvear at evangelism@feiends-ucc.org

**HELP CROCKETT ELEMENTARY CELEBRATE TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK, MAY 6:** Friends Church is helping the staff at our adopted school celebrate Teacher Appreciation Week by providing an ice cream sundae bar for the staff on Tuesday, May 6 at 1:30 p.m. Volunteers are needed to help with this event. Please contact Pam Engler (979-324-1631) if you want to help.

## Announcements

HAVE YOU TRIED THE 9AM SERVICE?: Our IIam worship services are full most Sundays. This is great! But if you prefer smaller crowds and a more contemplative worship experience, try the 9am service. Like the later service, 9am worship includes a children's message and sermon, but unlike it, the 9am service offers the prayers of the people and lighting candles for intercessions, silent meditation, and does not include an anthem from the choir. In an effort to be hospitable to newcomers and guests who might attend the IIam service, you can provide that welcoming space for others by giving the 9am service a try. Thank you for helping our church family be a community of God's radical inclusion and extravagant welcome.

MAY CLASS: "DO I STAY CHRISTIAN?": The Morning Manna and Social Justice classes will combine for the first three Sundays in May to study Brian McLaren's Do I Stay Christian? The book "addresses the powerful question that surprising numbers of people—including religious leaders—are asking in private. According to McLaren, there is a way to say both 'yes' and 'no' to the question of staying Christian by shifting the focus from 'whether we stay Christian' to 'how we stay human." Join us in the double classroom at Ioam, May 4, II, and I8 to learn more. Pastor Dan and Pastor Trent will co-lead this class. Note: You do not have to read the book to attend.

**FRIENDS WORSHIP VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:** Join our Friends Church worship team! We are in need of additional folks to help on Sunday mornings to serve as greeters, lay leaders and communion stewards to make our worship services flow smoothly. Sign up with these links. 9am Service **bit.ly/0900worship** IIam Service **bit.ly/II00worship** 

## **Opportunities to Serve and Share**

**SUPPORT OUR PODCAST:** Help us spread the good word! Share this week's sermon with those you love with our "Friends Congregational Church Sermons" podcast, available wherever you can find podcasts! Easily access and publicize our mission to follow the model of Jesus: to live faithfully, love limitlessly, and serve boldly. With over 100 episodes published (since Advent of last year) we've expanded (since Eastertide this year) our efforts to include the wider library of sermons offered before this podcast kicked off. We would love to have your support by either showing this podcast to friends and loved ones, and/or contributing your voice to introduce an episode. Volunteers can reach out to av@friends-ucc.org (Jeremy) if interested, or you might get approached after service. Recording takes less than 10 minutes and is almost entirely scripted.

**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

**HYPERBOLE BOOK SALE FOR CROCKETT ELEMENTARY, MAY II:** Hyperbole bookstore and Kathy Miller will hold a book sale Sunday, May II, here at Friends. Books purchased will be donated to the Crockett Elementary Free Book Fair which is Thursday, May 22. And as a bonus, Hyperbole is donating 10% of the proceeds to Christian Education here at Friends. Please help us make this year's book fair the best ever! Thank you!

**GRADUATE RECOGNITION SUNDAY, MAY 18:** You are invited to join in the 11am worship service on May 18 where we will celebrate our graduating high school seniors. We will share what is next for our graduates and bless them on their exciting new journeys. All are welcome.

**CROCKETT ELEMENTARY BOOK FAIR COLLECTION, MAY 22:** We have a date! Our book fair at Crockett will be Thursday, May 22 from 8:30 am to 2:30 pm. On Wednesday, May 21, we will be meeting at the church in the double rooms to separate books at 9:00 am until done. We need volunteers for both days! The day of the Fair, we will have two hour shifts for volunteers. Please continue to donate new or gently used books for Pre-K to 4th grade and place them in the box outside of the office. For questions or to volunteer, please contact Pam Engler or Jodie Robinson.

**NEW MEMBER SUNDAY, MAY 25:** On May 25, we welcome our newest members into the life of Friends Congregational Church. If you are interested in joining Friends Church on New Member 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).

ALL ABOARD! JOINING ON GOD'S JOURNEY – VBS REGISTRATION DUE MAY 30: Please fill out the registration by May 30 if you intend for you PreK - 5th grade child(ren) to attend VBS June 9-13 from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm with a light meal provided at 5:30. Use the link: https://tinyurl. com/2025FriendsVBS.

# 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

2200 Southwood Drive College Station, Texas 77845 979-693-7021 • office@friends-ucc.org 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.