

# FRIENDS CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Third Sunday of Advent  
December 15, 2024  
9:00am



*An Open & Affirming  
Congregation*

## **SCRIPTURE FOR MEDITATION:** Philippians 4:4-7, NRSV

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

## **QUOTE FOR MEDITATION:**

“Be joyful though you have considered all the facts.” —Wendell Berry

## **CHIMING OF THE TRINITY**

## **WORDS OF WELCOME**

Trent Williams

## **PRELUDE & LIGHTING OF THE ALTAR CANDLES**

## **\*CALL TO WORSHIP (RESPONSIVE)**

Becky Burks

One: A voice calls out in the wilderness.

**All: It sings of a home for all.  
It speaks of justice and peace.**

One: We could choose to ignore it.

**All: We could drown out that song.  
We could choose not to listen.**

One: Instead, we come into this space.

**All: We let the world grow quiet. We listen.**

One: A voice calls out in the wilderness. Do you hear it?

**All: We hear it. In listening, we worship.  
Let us draw near to God.**

**\*OPENING HYMN FOR LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE -**  
While We Are Waiting, Come

*Waiting*

1 While we are wait - ing, come;  
2 With power and glo - ry, come;  
3 Come, Sav - ior, quick - ly come;

while we are wait - ing, come.  
with power and glo - ry, come.  
come, Sav - ior, quick - ly come.

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

while we are wait - ing, come.

**\*INVOCATION**

Becky Burks

**\*PASSING OF THE PEACE**

Trent Williams

One: The peace of Christ be with you all.

Many: And also with you.

**PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION**

Dan De Leon

## CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Trent Williams

*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.**

## GOSPEL READING

Luke 3:1-18, CEB

Dan De Leon

In the fifteenth year of the rule of the emperor Tiberius—when Pontius Pilate was governor over Judea and Herod was ruler over Galilee, his brother Philip was ruler over Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was ruler over Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas—God's word came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. John went throughout the region of the Jordan River, calling for people to be baptized to show that they were changing their hearts and lives and wanted God to forgive their sins. This is just as it was written in the scroll of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

A voice crying out in the wilderness:

"Prepare the way for the Lord; make his paths straight. Every valley will be filled, and every mountain and hill will be leveled. The crooked will be made straight and the rough places made smooth. All humanity will see God's salvation."

Then John said to the crowds who came to be baptized by him, "You children of snakes! Who warned you to escape from the angry judgment that is coming soon? Produce fruit that shows you have changed your hearts and lives. And don't even think about saying to yourselves, Abraham is our father. I tell you that God is able to raise up Abraham's children from these stones. The ax is already at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be chopped down and tossed into the fire."

The crowds asked him, "What then should we do?"

He answered, "Whoever has two shirts must share with the one who has none, and whoever has food must do the same."

Even tax collectors came to be baptized. They said to him, "Teacher, what should we do?"

He replied, "Collect no more than you are authorized to collect."

Soldiers asked, "What about us? What should we do?"

He answered, "Don't cheat or harass anyone, and be satisfied with your pay."

The people were filled with expectation, and everyone wondered whether John might be the Christ. John replied to them all, "I baptize you with water, but the one who is more powerful than me is coming. I'm not worthy to loosen the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. The shovel he uses to sift the wheat from the husks is in his hands. He will clean out his threshing area and bring the wheat into his barn. But he will burn the husks with a fire that can't be put out." With many other words John appealed to them, proclaiming good news to the people.

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

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

**THE MESSAGE**

“Where Joy Resides”

Dan De Leon

**SILENT PRAYER & MEDITATION**

*One chime calls us into silence, and two chimes call us out of silence.*

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND LIGHTING OF CANDLES FOR INTERCESSIONS**

Trent Williams

**INVITATION TO SHARE**

Becky Burks

**OFFERTORY**

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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!

**\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

Trent Williams

**OBSERVANCE OF HOLY COMMUNION**

Trent Williams

**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.

**\*CLOSING HYMN - No. 115 The Baptist Shouts on Jordan's Shore**

*Winchester New*

**\*BENEDICTION**

Dan De Leon

**POSTLUDE**

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*Instrumental Music:*

Prelude: Bicinium on "Picardy" - Thomas Keesecker  
Offertory: In the Bleak Midwinter - Gustav Holst, arranged by Dan Forrest Jr.  
Communion: Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming - Traditional German Melody, arranged by Victor Labenske  
Postlude: Hark! the Herald Angels Sing with Angels We Have Heard On High -  
arranged by Bernadine Johnson

Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 22, 2024:

**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](mailto:office@friends-ucc.org).

## EVENTS THIS WEEK

**ADVENT MEDITATION, DEC 17:** You are invited to the Friends Church sanctuary to start your morning with centering meditation. At 7:30am on Tuesday, we gather for a brief introduction, followed by silent meditation, and follow-up conversion 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 the coming of Emanuel, God-With-Us, on Christmas. All are welcome.

**MIDWEEK ADVENT RECITALS, DEC 18:** Needing time to pause and surround yourself by the sounds of the season? If so, join us on Wednesday for a brown-bag lunch followed by a short musical program. Gather for food and fellowship at 11:30, and then stay for a 30-minute Recital of holiday music at noon, featuring the musical talents of our Friends Church musicians.

**LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE, DEC 18:** Depression. Loneliness. Estrangement. Loss. Different life circumstances make feeling and being joyful difficult for many in our congregation and wider community during the holidays. Honoring this reality and the need for safe, inclusive space where solace and healing can breathe, a Longest Night Service will be offered at Friends Church at 6:30pm, Dec. 18. The service will move from shadows to illumination as we pray, sing, share scriptures, and hold space for one another and all needing comfort.

**HELP PREP FOR CHRISTMAS EVE DEC 22:** Immediately following the 11am worship service on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 22, the Worship Committee will be prepping for the Christmas Eve service by changing the banners from purple to white, setting up candles, and assembling lumarias to illuminate the walkway leading up to the sanctuary. A few volunteers will make this hospitable task go much quicker. For more information contact Worship Committee Chair Charity Stokes: [worship@friends-ucc.org](mailto:worship@friends-ucc.org).

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR YOUTH GROUP'S 2025 MISSION TRIP PLANNING TEAM:** Do you love hearing from the Friends Youth Group each year about the great work they do on their Mission Trip? How'd you like to be part of the team that ensures our Youth have the best experience possible? We are currently in need of volunteers to serve on the Planning Team for the Youth Group's 2025 Mission Trip to Denver. This includes planning fundraisers, travel, and fun activities while in Colorado. Reach out to Pastor Brooke at [pastorbrooke@friends-ucc.org](mailto:pastorbrooke@friends-ucc.org) to be part of this important ministry.

**HELP NEEDED AND APPRECIATED: SIGN CHANGER TEAM FOR DECEMBER AND NEW YEAR:** Ever had a passion or interest in changing (and even suggest messages for) the church sign? Signer changers appreciated all year round, especially this month, with the end of year holiday season. This is your SIGN to learn more by connecting with Megan Alvear at [evangelism@friends-ucc.org](mailto:evangelism@friends-ucc.org). Thank you for your consideration!

**ANGEL TREE UPDATES:** Angel tree presents have been delivered to the Child Protective Services office. Thank you! Thank you! To the 56 families from Friends who said “Yes” to sponsoring one or more child from the Angel Tree. It is almost magical how it all comes together to bring happiness to these 65 children. The staff from CPS greeted us at the door saying, “we know that we can always count on your church!” And with that I certainly agree. If you are still interested in helping others in our community, we are accepting gas and food gift cards in the boxes under the trees in the narthex or you may give to Michael, our administrative assistant, during office hours. Our ministers distribute these cards to families in need from our community.

**FRIENDS GREETERS NEEDED:** Join our Friends Church greeter team! We are in need of additional folks to help welcome people on Sunday mornings and make our worship services flow smoothly. If you are interested in learning more, reach out to Worship Committee chair Charity Stokes at [worship@friends-ucc.org](mailto:worship@friends-ucc.org). You can also sign up online here: [bit.ly/FriendsGreeter](http://bit.ly/FriendsGreeter).

**SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS NEEDED:** We have all the Sunday school classes covered but are still looking for volunteers who could be called when teachers are out of town to be substitutes. Please let Pastor Dan or Abby Burley, [Christian\\_ed@friends-ucc.org](mailto:Christian_ed@friends-ucc.org), know if we can add you to our list.

## 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. 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 [podcast@friends-ucc.org](mailto:podcast@friends-ucc.org) (Jeremy) if interested, or you might get approached after service. Recording takes less than 10 minutes and is almost entirely scripted.

**Be a Greeter and Communion Steward:** To help in the 9am and 11am services, please contact Worship Committee Chair Charity Stokes: [worship@friends-ucc.org](mailto: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 school year. Contact Pastor Brooke at [pastorbrooke@friend-ucc.org](mailto: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](mailto:pastor@friends-ucc.org).

**Coffee Crew/Kitchen Angel:** “All I need is coffee; all we need are volunteers to make it!” Sign up via sheet on kitchen counter, at [bit.ly/friendschurchcoffee](http://bit.ly/friendschurchcoffee) or email Jan at [Fellowship@friends-ucc.org](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://Friends-ucc.org)) ▶ Get **Involved** ▶ **Volunteer** or email [office@friends-ucc.org](mailto:office@friends-ucc.org) for more information or to volunteer.

## SAVE THE DATE

**CHRISTMAS EVE AT FRIENDS CHURCH – HAND BELLS, COMMUNION, & CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT, DEC 24:** Beginning at 6:30pm on Christmas Eve, the handbell choir presents a short pre-service concert of holiday music to usher in the mystery and wonder of the Christ Child's birth. Then at 7pm, the Christmas Eve service of communion and carols by candlelight is offered. The service will also be live-streamed.

**CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED & UPDATES, DEC 25-27:** The church office will be closed on Wednesday, Dec 25 for Christmas Day. Michael will also be on vacation from Thursday (Dec 26) and Friday (Dec 27). Please send him any updates for worship and marketing before the holiday.

### 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.