



Friends Church

An Open & Affirming Congregation



Baptism of Christ
Dave Zelenka (2005)

December 10, 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: David Manuel & Kathy Miller
Greeters: Maura Ives & Martha Newsome

Next Sunday, December 17th:
Lay Leaders: Dinah Anderson & Jodie Robinson
Communion Stewards: Susan Fontaine & Kathy Miller
Greeters: Eli Vasquez & Alex Cannon

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.

Second Sunday of Advent

Advent means 'Coming' in Latin. The four Sundays in Advent are observed in preparation for the coming nativity of Jesus, the Christ child. The Advent season is a time of expectant waiting for the celebration of Emanuel, 'God with us,' being born into the world at Christmas. It is also the beginning of the liturgical year in Western Christianity.

SCRIPTURE FOR MEDITATION: Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13, NRSV

Lord, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob. You forgave the iniquity of your people; you pardoned all their sin. Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts. Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky. The Lord will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase. Righteousness will go before him, and will make a path for his steps.

CHIMING OF THE TRINITY

WORDS OF WELCOME

Trent Williams

PRELUDE & LIGHTING OF THE ALTAR CANDLES

CALL TO WORSHIP

Kathy Miller

***HYMN FOR LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE - LIGHT ONE CANDLE** verses 1 & 2

With purpose (♩ = 88)

1 Light one can - dle for hope,
 2 Light one can - dle for peace,
 3 Light one can - dle for joy,
 4 Light one can - dle for love,

hope that the whole world needs.
 peace that the whole world needs.
 joy that the whole world needs.
 love that the whole world needs.

Light one can - dle for hope,
 Light one can - dle for peace,
 Light one can - dle for joy,
 Light one can - dle for love,

hope that the Sav - ior will bring;
 peace that the Sav - ior will bring;
 joy that the Sav - ior will bring;
 love that the Sav - ior will bring;

hope that the Sav - ior will bring.
 peace that the Sav - ior will bring.
 joy that the Sav - ior will bring.
 love that the Sav - ior will bring.

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***INVOCATION**

Kathy Miller

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

Brooke Dooley

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

HEBREW SCRIPTURE READING

Isaiah 40:1-II, NRSV

Kathy Miller

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the

glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” A voice says, “Cry out!” And I said, “What shall I cry?” All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!” See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

GOSPEL READING

Mark 1:1-8, CEB

Dan De Leon

The beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ, God’s Son, happened just as it was written about in the prophecy of Isaiah:

Look, I am sending my messenger before you.
He will prepare your way,
a voice shouting in the wilderness:
“Prepare the way for the Lord;
make his paths straight.”

John the Baptist was in the wilderness calling for people to be baptized to show that they were changing their hearts and lives and wanted God to forgive their sins. Everyone in Judea and all the people of Jerusalem went out to the Jordan River and were being baptized by John as they confessed their sins. John wore clothes made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey. He announced, “One stronger than I am is coming after me. I’m not even worthy to bend over and loosen the strap of his sandals. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

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

Kathy Miller

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!

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

**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

Dan De Leon, Brooke Dooley

THE CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

Friends Church Children & Youth

***CLOSING HYMN #478** I've Got Peace Like a River

Tune: Peace Like a River

*BENEDICTION

Dan De Leon

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.

* - for Christmas text, substitute Advent themes: love, joy, peace, hope

POSTLUDE

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Instrumental Music:

- Prelude: Prepare the Way, O Zion - Music from *Then Swenska Psalmboken*
Offertory: Dona Nobis Pacem (Grant Unto Us Peace) - Round by an unknown German composer of the 16th or 17th Centuries, arranged by John Thompson
Postlude: How Great Our Joy! - German Carol, arranged by Jack Schrader

Scripture for Third Sunday in Advent, December 17, 2023:

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

WONDERFUL WEDNESDAYS WITH WOMEN: Will gather on December 13 from 5:00 to 7:00 PM at Papa Perez in Downtown Bryan. This month we’ll be doing an optional White Elephant Gift Exchange. If you would like to participate, the spending limit is \$20. All are welcome.

CHRISTMAS CANTATA ON DEC 14: On Thursday, December 14th, at 7:30 pm, the Friends Church Choir and Chamber Orchestra will be performing John Michael Trotta’s “Magnificat” for this year’s Christmas Cantata. The event is free, and all are welcome. Composed in 2019, this newer setting of the Song of Mary includes a variety of choral styles, stirring orchestrations, gorgeous soprano and baritone solos, and sublime a cappella movements. Additionally, a Reception will follow the evening’s performance. This work has been an absolute joy to bring to life, and we hope you will be able to join us.

REFRESHMENTS FOR CHRISTMAS CANTATA RECEPTION: Refreshment donations, sweet or savory, for Christmas Cantata reception are needed. Please sign up at church (sheet on buffet counter) or by emailing Fellowship@friends-ucc.org.

MORNING MEDITATIONS FOR ADVENT: On Tuesdays during Advent, you are invited to the Friends Church sanctuary to start your morning with centering meditation. At 7:30am on Tuesdays, Dec. 12, & 19, we gather for a brief introduction, followed by silent meditation, and follow-up conversation as time permits. 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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DEVOTIONAL BOOKLET FOR ADVENT NOW AVAILABLE: Advent begins Sunday, December 3. Copies of the UCC’s Daily Devotionals booklet for Advent, GLOW are available for pickup in the narthex; one per household, please. The electronic version (pdf) may be purchased individually at thepilgrimpress.com.

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 ON BREAK FOR 2 SUNDAYS: The 9am worship service will not be offered on Sundays, December 24 and 31. Join us for the 11am service on those Sundays, and for the Handbell Choir Concert and Christmas Eve Service on Christmas Eve night. The 9am services resume on January 7, 2024.

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!

FRIENDS CHURCH ANGEL TREE: Thank you! All children and youth have been sponsored. You can review your sponsored child and instructions for delivering presents by following the link on the homepage. We will also be accepting food and gas cards for our pastors to distribute to those in need in our community. Gift cards can be mailed to the church or put in the Gift Card box that will appear under the Christmas trees in the narthex. Contact awehrly@suddenlink.net with questions.

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

YOUTH GROUP CHRISTMAS PARTY: The Friends Church Youth Group will be having our annual Christmas party on December 17, 5-7pm at the Roblyer's home. We will be joining with the Pride Community Center for food, games, and holiday fun. There will be locally made cookies for decorating, and our traditional white elephant gift exchange. Bring a wrapped item under \$5 for the white elephant, and a dish to share for a potluck. For more information, location, and questions, reach out to Pastor Brooke, pastorbrooke@friends-ucc.org.

INSTRUMENTALISTS & SINGERS NEEDED FOR TAIZÉ MUSIC IN LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE: On Dec. 21, Friends Church offers a contemplative worship service called the Longest Night with music led by volunteer musicians playing songs from the Taizé community. If you enjoy singing or playing an instrument and would like to join this one-time ensemble, consider participating in the Longest Night. A rehearsal will be held in the double classroom after the 11am service on Dec. 17. Participants also need to arrive at 5:30pm on Dec. 21 for soundcheck and warm-up before the service begins. For more information, contact Pastor Dan at pastor@friends-ucc.org.

LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE DEC 21: Depression. Loneliness. Estrangement. Loss. Our different life circumstances make being and feeling 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 on Winter Solstice, Dec. 21. The service will move from shadows to illumination as we pray, sing, share scriptures, light the Advent candles, and hold space for one another and all needing comfort on the longest night of the year.

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*)
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