

FRIENDS CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



Third Sunday of Easter
May 4, 2025
9:00am

*An Open & Affirming
Congregation*

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

Brooke Dooley

PRELUDE & LIGHTING OF THE ALTAR CANDLES

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

Diane Simpson

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.*

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

Here I Am



***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

Brooke Dooley

One: The peace of Christ be with you all.

Many: **And also with you.**

READING FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES Acts 9:1-20, CEB

Dan De Leon

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.

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!

THE MESSAGE

“Tell the Whole Story”

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

Dan De Leon

INVITATION TO SHARE

Diane Simpson

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 uplifts,
Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit,
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

Brooke Dooley

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

Brooke Dooley

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. 493 O Jesus, I Have Promised

Angel's Story

***BENEDICTION**

Dan De Leon

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

Bring Forth

POSTLUDE

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Instrumental Music:

Prelude: Come, Christians, Join to Sing - Spanish Melody, arranged by Matt Limbaugh
Offertory: Fairest Lord Jesus - Music from *Schleishe Volkslieder*, arranged by Richard Storrs Willis
Communion: Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us - William B. Bradbury, arranged by Phillip Keveren
Postlude: The Imperial March (Darth Vader's Theme) from *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* - 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.

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. See bread.org for examples and videos that explain how to write an effective letter and why letters can be a powerful force for change. 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 (including future planning for community events and swag). If you have any thoughts or questions leading up to the meeting, please contact Megan Alvear at evangelism@feields-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 by text or phone (979-324-1631) if you would be interested in helping

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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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 11am Service bit.ly/1100worship

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 10am, May 4, 11, and 18 to learn more. Pastor Dan and Pastor Trent will co-lead this class. Note: You do not have to read the book to attend.

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.

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.

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.

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: “All I need is coffee; all we need are volunteers to make it!”

Sign up via sheet on kitchen counter, at bit.ly/friendschurchcoffee or email Jan at 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

HYPERBOLE BOOK SALE FOR CROCKETT ELEMENTARY, MAY 11: Hyperbole bookstore and Kathy Miller will hold a book sale Sunday, May 11, 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 this link: <https://ti-nyurl.com/2025FriendsVBS>

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*)
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Administrative Assistant

Michael Rangel (*he, him*)
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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.