

**FRIENDS CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

Third Sunday of Advent
December 17, 2023
9:00am



*An Open & Affirming
Congregation*

QUOTE FOR MEDITATION:

“Knowing your own darkness is the best method for dealing with the darkness of other people. One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious. The most terrifying thing is to accept oneself completely.”

-Carl Jung

CHIMING OF THE TRINITY

WORDS OF WELCOME

Kyle Riley

PRELUDE & LIGHTING OF THE ALTAR CANDLES

CALL TO WORSHIP

Dinah Anderson

***HYMN FOR LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE - Light One Candle (verses 1-3)**

With purpose (♩ = 88)

2

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

7
 Light one can - dle for hope,
 Light one can - dle for peace,
 Light one can - dle for joy,
 Light one can - dle for love,

10
 hope peace 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;

12
 hope peace 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.

2

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***INVOCATION**

Dinah Anderson

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

Kyle Riley

One: The peace of Christ be with you all.

Many: And also with you.

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Kyle Riley

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 #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

John 1:6-8, 19-28 NRSV

Brooke Dooley

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

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

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

THE MESSAGE

Brooke Dooley

SILENT REFLECTION & MEDITATION

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

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE & LIGHTING OF CANDLES FOR INTERCESSIONS

Kyle Riley

INVITATION TO SHARE

Dinah Anderson

OFFERTORY

Secure online giving via Church Office Giving at bit.ly/givetofriends
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 (UNISON)

Kyle Riley

God of joy, just as John the Baptist came long ago in Judea to witness to your light, we remember that the offering you seek is that we, too, may also witness to the light. May we do so through our giving and our compassion, through what we say and how we live. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Kyle Riley, Trent Williams

*THE LORD'S PRAYER

Kyle Riley

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.

*CLOSING HYMN #117 Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates

Tune: Truro

*BENEDICTION

Brooke Dooley

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.

POSTLUDE

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Instrumental Music:

Prelude: Nun Komm, Der Heiden Heiland (Savior of the Nations, Come) - Plainsong Melody
Offertory: The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came - Traditional Basque Carol
Communion: Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming - Traditional German Melody, arranged by Victor Labenske
Postlude: Lo, He Comes With Clouds Descending - Traditional English Melody

Scripture for Fourth Sunday in Advent, December 24, 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

MORNING MEDITATIONS FOR ADVENT BEGIN- Dec. 5: On Tuesdays during Advent, you are invited to the Friends Church sanctuary to start your morning with centering meditation. At 7:30am on Tuesday 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.

YOUTH 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.

LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE: 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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHRISTMAS FUND MISSION OFFERING: On December 17 & 24, Friends Church will take up the Christmas Fund, a mission offering of the United Church of Christ. The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the UCC for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to lower-income retirees. The theme for this year’s fund is “Grace Upon Grace.” Please bring a donation to the services either of these dates, or give online through our website (“One-time” donation under “Special Offerings,” and put “Christmas Fund” in the Notes).

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 AND SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH ON BREAK FOR 2 SUNDAYS: The 9am worship service and 10am Sunday School classes for children and youth, K-12, will not be offered on Sundays, December 24 and 31. All are welcome to 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 and Sunday School classes 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: Do you enjoy having coffee/hot beverages available at Sunday morning services? Sign up 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

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE PREP: On Christmas Eve, December 24th the Worship Committee invites you to help prepare the sanctuary for the Christmas Eve Service. We are changing the banners, changing out the colors in the Sanctuary from Purple to White, changing the ornaments to white, and putting out the candles and luminaries. All hands on deck as there will be a small group at church that morning!

Friends Church Staff

Senior Pastor

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