

FRIENDS CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



Fifth Sunday in Lent
March 17, 2024
9:00am

*An Open & Affirming
Congregation*

PSALM FOR MEDITATION: Psalm 119:9-16, NRSV

How can young people keep their way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; do not let me stray from your commandments. I treasure your word in my heart, so that I may not sin against you. Blessed are you, O Lord; teach me your statutes. With my lips I declare all the ordinances of your mouth. I delight in the way of your decrees as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts, and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

QUOTE FOR MEDITATION:

“The wheat grows beyond the border of life; the wheat brings forth a standard of daring love. ‘Those who love their life lose it’ (John 12:25). The wheat breaks the border, it dances with the voice of God, it is not cautious, it is not scarce. It is love.”

—Hannah Garrity, from Artist Reflection for Drawn to Love

CHIMING OF THE TRINITY

WORDS OF WELCOME

Dan De Leon

PRELUDE & LIGHTING OF THE ALTAR CANDLES

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

Cathy Hansen

“A Lenten Blessing for More Compassion” by Dr. Kate Bowler

One: This Lent, you have shown us more about who we really are.
But because of who you are, what we’ve learned is not so much what has
been but what will be.

**All: And we have an inkling this is only the beginning,
a mere taste of what is to come.**

One: O God, would you make us able to live as if all this truth were really true?
Remind us of your infinite grace, your infinite compassion.

**All: Give us the courage to live for others, as you have so courageously given
your life for us. Amen.**

***OPENING HYMN - #197** Jesus, Keep Me near the Cross

Tune: Near the Cross

***INVOCATION**

Cathy Hansen

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

Dan De Leon

One: The peace of Christ be with you all.

Many: **And also with you.**

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Dan De Leon

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

Dan De Leon

Children in the sanctuary are invited to come to the front. All are invited to sing a verse of NCH #525 “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 12:20-33, NRSV

Kyle Riley

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Philip went and told Andrew, then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor. Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say: ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

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

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

THE MESSAGE

“Drawn to Love”

Kyle Riley

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

Dan De Leon

INVITATION TO SHARE

Cathy Hansen

OFFERTORY

Secure online giving via Church Office Giving at bit.ly/givetofriends
Venmo to 979-307-8860 or @friendsucc

*DOXOLOGY

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God for all that love has done;
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One. Amen.

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Dan De Leon

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Dan De Leon

Our Parent, who is among us, blessed be your Creation.
May your reign be a reality here on earth.
May we become more interested in building your kin-dom here and now than in wait-
ing for it to come down from above.
Let us share our bread with those who hunger.
Let us learn to forgive as well as to receive forgiveness.
Help us through the time of temptation, delivering us from all evil.
For ours are the eternal blessings that you pour upon the earth.
Amen.

*CLOSING HYMN - #493 O Jesus, I Have Promised

Tune: Angel's Story

*BENEDICTION

Kyle Riley

POSTLUDE

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Instrumental Music:

Prelude: Beneath the Cross of Jesus - Ruth Elaine Schram
Offertory: Variations on "Fairest Lord Jesus" - Anthony Giamanco
Communion: Soul, Adorn Thyself with Gladness - J. Crüger
Postlude: In the Cross of Christ I Glory - John Bowring

Scriptures for Palm/Passion Sunday, March 24, 2024: Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Mark 11:1-11; Mark 15:1-15, 25-39

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

LENTEN MORNING MEDITATION, MARCH 19: On Tuesdays during Lent, you are invited to the Friends Church sanctuary to start your morning with centering meditation. At 7:30am on Tuesdays, Mar. 19th and 26th, we gather for a brief introduction, followed by silent meditation, and follow-up conversation 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 Easter.

“BROKEN”: REAL LIFE AND REAL FAITH, MARCH 19: On March 19th, we will gather in the sanctuary at 6:30pm to watch episode 5 of the 2017 BBC drama series “Broken” and have conversation about how faith and real life intersect. Even if you can’t make every week, you are welcome to attend, and can view the episodes you might have missed on Amazon Prime or Britbox. Please be advised that the themes can be intense, including suicidal ideation and the intersection of race and police violence. Contact Pastor Trent if you have any questions.

LENTEN MIDDAY RECITAL SERIES, MARCH 20: Join us for a series of Lenten Midday Recitals, featuring the talents of our wonderful musicians of Friends Church! Bring your own lunch for fellowship beginning at 11:30 am, and stay for a 20-30 minute program, beginning at 12:00, of music selected by our gifted musicians. A variety of music - sacred, musical theatre, classical, and pop - will be performed each week. The last recital is March 20. We hope you can take time out from these busy weeks to relax and enjoy great music.

THEOLOGY ON TAP, MARCH 21: At 6pm on March 21st, Theology on Tap (T.o.T.) is held at KinderHill Brew Lab, 800 S. Bryan Ave. T.o.T.’s informal discussions bring our lives more in tune with God’s will and way as we get to know each other better beyond church walls. The venue has an assortment of great beers on tap. You don’t need to be fond of beer to join us, nor do you have to be 21 or older. Non-alcoholic beverages are available, and minors are welcome, as are four-leggeds. Cheers, and amen!

B.Y.O.F. FOR PALM SUNDAY, MARCH 24: On Palm/Passion Sunday, we celebrate Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Like many churches, we celebrate this story by waving palm branches and singing in our worship services. But to really get into the story in our context, what do we have nearby that we would wave in celebration today? Maybe you have yaupon lining your yard, oak trees, or Texas wildflowers. For Palm/Passion Sunday, March 24, you’re encouraged to BYOF (bring your own fronds) to church and wave whatever you may have in your yard (except, of course, poison ivy). And if you would prefer to stay with traditional palms, we will have those available as well.

NEW MEMBER SUNDAY, 3/24: March 24 is our next New Member Sunday, when we welcome our newest members into the life of Friends Congregational Church. If you are interested in joining Friends on that 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).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FINANCIAL UPDATE: For those who are interested in a follow-up from the Congregational Meeting in December, please read the letter from Moderator Jackie Womack at <https://bit.ly/43atksE>

FROM THE SENIOR PASTORAL RELATIONS TEAM: SABBATICAL FOR SENIOR PASTOR, APRIL 1 – JULY 15: The day after Easter, Pastor Dan will begin a three-and-a-half-month sabbatical. During this time of intentional rest, reflection, and renewal, he will step away from all pastoral duties to travel, recharge, grow, and gain fresh perspectives. Pastor Dan's absence will also create space for Pastors Trent and Brooke to grow and flourish as they take on some of his responsibilities for a time. This sabbatical also demonstrates the importance of rest and self-care for all of us. As a congregation, we can support Pastor Dan during this sabbatical by praying for his well-being and continuing to engage with and support the ministries of Friends Church, while eagerly anticipating the wisdom and inspiration he'll bring back to us. With hope, this intentional season of rest will bear fruit for years to come.

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!

SUPPORT OUR PODCAST: The "Friends Congregational Church Sermons" podcast is getting downloads across the country and even overseas! Each episode, featuring a sermon and introduced by a different church member, is an evangelism and outreach tool for all of us at Friends. Support the podcast by sharing it widely. So far the record number of downloads for an episode is 69. With your help we can hit at least 100 every week! You can also support the podcast by lending your voice to it. Contact A/V Tech Jeremy Dudo to record the intro for an episode: av@friends-ucc.org.

Be a Greeter and Communion Steward: To help in the 9am and 11am services, 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 the Youth Group events for the new year, including the June Mission Trip. Contact Pastor Brooke at pastor-brooke@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? Signup 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

HISTORY IN HEARNE TRIP, MARCH 28: Visit the Hearne Railroad Depot and Museum, lunch at local restaurant and then on to tour Camp Hearne WWII Historic Site and Exhibit on March 28 from 10:30-4:00. What else do I need to know? Meet at church and carpool. Lunch is on-your-own. Museum and exhibits are free but donations are welcome. For assistance with transportation or lunch costs, contact Kristin Harper. RSVP by March 25.



MAUNDY THURSDAY, MARCH 28: Maundy Thursday is the day in Holy Week when we remember the new command Jesus gives his followers, to “love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” It is traditionally observed with foot- or hand-washing, and communion may also be observed. Instead of a formal worship service, the sanctuary will be open for two hours that evening with the pastors present to offer foot- or hand-washing as well as communion, and to pray with those who come to the church during that time. Chris Hoffman will offer piano music to carry us into that upper room with the disciples where Jesus shared a final meal with them before washing their feet. We hope you will come by to join in this special, come-and-go observance of Maundy Thursday any time between 6 and 8pm

GOOD FRIDAY, MARCH 29: On Good Friday, March 29, at 7:30 pm, the Friends Choir will be joined by a Chamber Orchestra, performing Paul Mealor’s “Stabat Mater.” The evening will begin with Scripture and Prayer, and will conclude with this incredibly moving Masterwork, which is a hymn to the Virgin Mary that portrays her suffering during the crucifixion of Jesus. Paul Mealor is a Welsh composer who had been commissioned to write music for the Royal Wedding of Prince William and Princess Catherine, and most recently for the Coronation of Charles III and Camilla...and has agreed to write an anthem for the Friends Choir in honor of Chris Hoffman’s upcoming 20th anniversary (June 2026). All are welcome to attend this Worship Service and be immersed in this musical experience.

EASTER EGG HUNT, MARCH 31: After the 11am service, Christian Ed will host the Easter Egg Hunt at the church. Please meet up in the double classroom with a basket. A potluck will follow after the egg hunt.

EASTER FINGER FOOD POTLUCK, MARCH 31: Please join us in the sanctuary following the 11am Easter service for a finger food potluck. We ask that donated food is able to be eaten without requiring flatware. Drinks will be provided. Direct any questions to Fellowship@friends-ucc.org.

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

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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.