



Friends Church

An Open & Affirming Congregation



"Good Shepherd"
Kelly Latimore, 2019

December 18, 2022
9:00am & 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.

NOTE OF GRATITUDE: The volunteers helping with today's worship services are Tom Vogel and Lanette Schulte (lay leaders); and Katy Yeager, and Rick and Lanette Schulte (greeters).

Worship service volunteers for Saturday, December 24, are Dwight Baker (lay leader); and Doris Machinski (greeter)

Worship service volunteers for next Sunday, December 25, are Kelly Wellman (lay leader); and Peggy Vitek (greeter).

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.

Fourth 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.

CHIMING OF THE TRINITY

WORDS OF WELCOME

Brooke Dooley

PRELUDE & LIGHTING OF THE ALTAR CANDLES

*CALL TO WORSHIP (BASED ON LUKE 1:46B-53) & LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT

CANDLE OF LOVE

Sylvia Gongora & Terri Miller (9am)

Brooke, Tony, Saige Torres (11am)

One: Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together,
she was found to be great with child from the Holy Spirit.
Joseph planned to dismiss her quietly,
but just when he had resolved to do this,
an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said,

All: **“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife,
for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.
She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus.**

One: Today we light the fourth candle of Advent, the Candle of Love.

All: **May we become people of liberating love. Come, Lord Jesus!**

**HYMN FOR LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE: Waiting for You

$\text{♩} = 110$

We are wait - ing for you, know-ing that you_

al-ways a-bide,___ we are wak - ing_ to your pres-ence

and our hearts are___ o - pen wide,

o - pen_ wide... o - pen_ wide.

**INVOCATION

Tom Vogel (9am)
Lanette Schulte (11am)

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Tami Dudo

Children in the sanctuary are invited to come to the front, and children watching online are invited to get closer to their screen for the children's message. All are invited to sing a verse of "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 (oh let it shine)!**

**PASSING OF THE PEACE

Trent Williams

One: The peace of Christ be with you all.

Many: **And also with you!**

HYMN OF RESPONSE: NCH #116 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel Tune: Veni Emmanuel
(verses 1, 2, 3, 6, 7)

PSALM READING: Psalm 23:1-4 (CEB)

Tom Vogel (9am)
Lanette Schulte (11am)

The Lord is my shepherd. I lack nothing. He lets me rest in grassy meadows; he leads me to restful waters; he keeps me alive. He guides me in proper paths for the sake of his good name. Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no danger because you are with me. Your rod and your staff—they protect me.

CHORAL ANTHEM: Angels' Carol - John Rutter

Have you heard the sound of the angel voices ringing out so sweetly, ringing out so clear?
Have you seen the star shining out so brightly as a sign from God that Christ the Lord is here? Have you heard the news that they bring from heaven to the humble shepherds who have waited long? Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo! Hear the angels sing their joyful song.

He is come in peace in the winter's stillness, like a gentle snowfall in the gentle night; he is come in joy like the sun at morning filling all the world with radiance and with light. He is come in love as the child of Mary; in a simple stable we have seen his birth: Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo! Hear the angels singing "Peace on earth."
He will bring new light to a world in darkness, like a bright star shining in the skies above; he will bring new hope to the waiting nations when he comes to reign in purity and love. Let the earth rejoice at the Savior's coming; let the heavens answer with the joyful morn: Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo! Hear the angels singing "Christ is born."

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

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

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

THE MESSAGE

Dan De Leon

MOMENT FOR REFLECTION

WHERE I SAW GOD THIS WEEK & INVITATION TO SHARE

Steve Robinson (ITAM)

OFFERTORY

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

Text to give: Text **Friends** to 979-500-2523

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**

Trent Williams

CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Brooke Dooley, Trent Williams

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.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS & INVITATION TO JOIN FRIENDS CHURCH

Brooke Dooley, Trent Williams

****CLOSING HYMN: Glory to God #110 Love Has Come**

Tune: Bring a Torch



1 Love has come: a light in the dark - ness!
 2 Love is born! Come, share in the won - der.
 3 Love has come and nev - er will leave us!

(D) (B m7) (Em) (A7) (D)
 F Dm7 Gm C7 F



Love shines forth in the Beth - le - hem skies. See, all
 Love is God now a - sleep in the hay. See the
 Love is life ev - er - last - ing and free. Love is

(A) (D) (B m) (D) (A) (G) (D)
 C F Dm F C B^b F



heav - en has come to pro - claim it; hear how their song of
 glow in the eyes of his moth - er; what is the name her
 Je - sus with - in and a - mong us. Love is the peace our

(Em7) (F#7) (G) (A) (B m) (A7)
 Gm7 A7 B^b C Dm C7



joy a - ris - es: Love! Love! Born un - to you, a
 heart is say - ing? Love! Love! Love is the name she
 hearts are seek - ing. Love! Love! Love is the gift of

(D) (A) (G) (A) (D) (A) (A7) (Dsus) (D)
 F C B^b C F C C7 Fsus F



Sav - ior! Love! Love! Glo - ry to God on high.
 whis - pers. Love! Love! Je - sus, Em - man - u - el.
 Christ - mas. Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!

****BENEDICTION**

Dan De Leon

POSTLUDE

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Instrumental Music:

- Prelude: Ukrainian Bell Carol - Mykola Leontovych, arranged by Dan Coates
Offertory: Pastorale Symphony (from *Messiah*) - George Frideric Handel
Communion: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel - Plainsong, arranged by Dan Forrest Jr.
Postlude: How Great Our Joy (Inspired by Clarke's *Trumpet Tune*) - Traditional German Melody, arranged by Faye López

Scriptures for Dec 25: Psalm 95:6-7; Isaiah 52:7-10; Hebrews 1:1-4; Luke 2:8-20

GETTING CONNECTED AT FRIENDS

CHRISTMAS EVE AT FRIENDS CHURCH – HAND BELLS, COMMUNION, & CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT: Beginning at 6:30pm on Christmas Eve, the hand bell 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.

HOLIDAY BREAK: Sunday school for children and youth will take a break for the holidays. We won't meet from December 18th-January 1st, and classes will resume on January 8th. Merry Christmas, and we're looking forward to the new Sunday school year!

11AM SERVICES ONLY ON CHRISTMAS & NEW YEARS: Christmas Day and New Years Day fall on Sundays. For those sleepy holiday mornings, Friends Church will offer only one service at 11am. Two services on Sundays will resume in 2023 on January 8th at 9am and 11am.

ANGEL TREE DELIVERY TO CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES OFFICE: It took 2 pickup trucks, 2 more SUVs, and six people to deliver all of the presents for the 65 children who Friends sponsored for Christmas this year. The folks at that office were ready for us with more volunteers waiting to help us unload. The next step in the journey will be for the caseworkers to deliver the presents to the homes of the children. Thanks to all of you who felt the call to share with these children and to bring joy into their world. Gas and grocery gift cards are still being accepted. These gift cards are distributed by our pastors to people in our community who stop by Friends for emergency assistance. You may drop gift cards by the church office or put in the gift box under the Christmas tree in the church narthex.

THE LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE, 12/21: Longest Night or Blue Christmas services provide space for all who might be experiencing loneliness, struggling with depression, or going through loss in whatever form during the holiday season. Different life circumstances make joviality difficult for many in our congregation and community. Recognizing 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, Wednesday, 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.

LAST NIGHT IN “ADVENT CONSPIRACY” SERIES, TUES, 12/20: The word ‘Advent’ means “coming” in Latin, as in the coming nativity of Jesus. While the word ‘conspiracy’ might sound cringey given the state of our world, it actually derives from the Latin word ‘conspirare,’ which means “to breathe together.” To conspire is “to act in harmony toward a common end.” This Tuesday night, Dec. 20, we gather at Friends Church one last time in this four-part series toward the common end of preparing for Jesus’ birth. Even if you have not joined us in previous weeks, you are welcome to attend. We will watch a brief video from the Advent Conspiracy resources on the evening’s topic, “Love All,” and share informal conversation, followed by a time of prayer. For more information, contact Pastor Dan: pastor@friends-ucc.org.

LAST ADVENT MIDDAY LUNCHEON RECITAL THIS WEDNESDAY: Need a midweek holiday pick-me-up? Join us at Friends for the last in our series of four Advent Midday Luncheon Recitals, Wednesday at noon, Dec. 21. Bring your lunch and enjoy fellowship, followed by performances of Advent and Christmas music performed by talented members of Friends Church’s music ministry.

LAST MORNING MEDITATION FOR ADVENT: This Tuesday morning, you are invited to the Friends Church sanctuary to start your morning with centering meditation. At 7:30am on Dec.20, we gather for a brief introduction, followed by silent meditation, and follow-up conversation as time permits. 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. This series of morning meditations has been bringing us together in self- and community-preparation for the coming of Emanuel, God-With-Us, on Christmas. All are welcome.

REQUEST A NEW NAME TAG: Our new name tags are available and can be picked up in the narthex. If you haven’t yet had a chance to request an updated version, you can do that here: bit.ly/friendsnametags.

WEAR YOUR PJS TO CHURCH ON CHRISTMAS: This year, for the first time in six years, Christmas Day falls on a Sunday. Our faith family will embrace the homey feeling of Christmas by wearing our pajamas to church that morning. We're a come-as-you-are, open & affirming people after all, so wear your favorite holiday PJs as your Sunday best on Christmas morning at 11am at Friends Church.

CHRISTMAS WEEK FOOD DISTRIBUTION: The food distribution at Peace Lutheran Church will be on Wednesday, December 21st rather than our usual Friday due to the closure of the Brazos Valley Food Bank for Christmas. Come and join our enthusiastic food distribution team on Dec. 21st between 1:30 and 3:00. Meet us in the Peace Lutheran parking lot. It will definitely put you in the Christmas spirit! Contact Anne with any questions awehrly@suddenlink.net.

JANUARY THEOLOGY ON TAP: The first Theology on Tap (T.o.T.) of 2023 will meet on the third Thursday of the month, January 19, at 6pm. T.o.T. gathers at KinderHill Brew Lab, 800 S. Bryan Ave in Bryan. We call it "Theology on Tap" because the informal discussions revolve around faith and spirituality, and 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. There are non-alcoholic beverages, minors are welcome, as are four-leggeds, and there is a wood-fired pizza food truck onsite. So, let's support local business and gather for Friends Church's next T.o.T., 1/19, at 6pm. Cheers and amen!

FRIENDS CHURCH BOOK CLUB WILL RESUME IN JANUARY: The Linda Coats Book Club meets on the last Thursday of every month. In 2023, the theme will be "spiritual memoirs", with our first book being *Take This Bread* by Sara Miles. February's book will be *Brother to a Dragonfly* by Will D. Campbell. All are welcome!!! For questions or information, contact the Spiritual Life Committee at spirit_develop@friends-ucc.org.

PASTOR DAN LEADS MLK BOOK STUDY AT LINCOLN CENTER: Coretta Scott King wrote that "if there is one book [my husband] Martin Luther King, Jr. has written that people consistently tell me has changed their lives, it is *Strength to Love*." At 6:30pm on the Wednesday evening after MLK Day, January 18, 2023, the Lincoln Center offers an informal study of Dr. King's 1963 book, *Strength to Love*, that Coretta Scott King says, "best explains the central element of [his] philosophy of nonviolence: His belief in a divine, loving presence that binds all life." Our own Pastor Dan will lead the book study and discussion that is free and open to the public. Copies of *Strength to Love* are available to purchase at the Lincoln Center, 1000 Eleanor Street in College Station, for \$12.

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*)
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