



Friends Church

An Open & Affirming Congregation



3 Domingo de Adviento B
Misioneros Del Sagrado Corazón en el Perú

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

Next Sunday, December 24th:
Lay Leader: Becky Burks
Greeter: Stacy De Leon

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.

Third 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.

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

Grace Jackson

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

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**

Jodie Robinson

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 (oh let it shine)!**

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

Dan De Leon

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (UNISON)

Dan De Leon

God of the Prophets,

We cry out with you at the injustice in this world. We cry out because people continue to choose violence and claim it in your name. We cry out because illness and pain have touched our loved ones, and our own lives. We cry out because families can't make ends meet. We cry out because people cannot get the treatment necessary for their illness. We want to sing Mary's song, to be proud and to rejoice, but all that escapes our lips is a whimper, a sigh too deep for words, a roaring rage of tears. We know you are listening, you know our pain. Help us to be the menders and healers this world desperately needs. Help us to join in the work of reparation and restoration. Call upon us to do our part, wherever we can, to hold one another in our grief, in our sorrows, and in our healing. All this we pray in your name. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF GRACE

Dan De Leon

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

Dan De Leon

One: The peace of Christ be with you all.

Many: And also with you!

*HYMN OF RESPONSE #107 Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn

Tune: Rejoice, Rejoice

HEBREW SCRIPTURE READING

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 NRSV

Jodie Robinson

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.

They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

CHORAL ANTHEM: Walk in Light - Karen Marroli (Wolfgang Verdegaal, violin)

And we shall study war no more. Come, O people, O come and walk in the light of the Lord. And we shall walk the paths of peace. Come, O people, O come and walk in the light of the Lord. The night is far spent; the day is at hand.

Dona nobis pacem...

So let us cast off the works of night so we may wear a Shield of Day. Come, O people, O come and walk in the light of the Lord. Evermore and evermore.

And we shall walk in paths of peace. Come, O people, O come and walk in the light of the Lord. Evermore, and evermore.

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

MOMENT FOR REFLECTION

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 (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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dan De Leon, Brooke Dooley

*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.

* For Christmas time only. (Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates)

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 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*)
office@friends-ucc.org