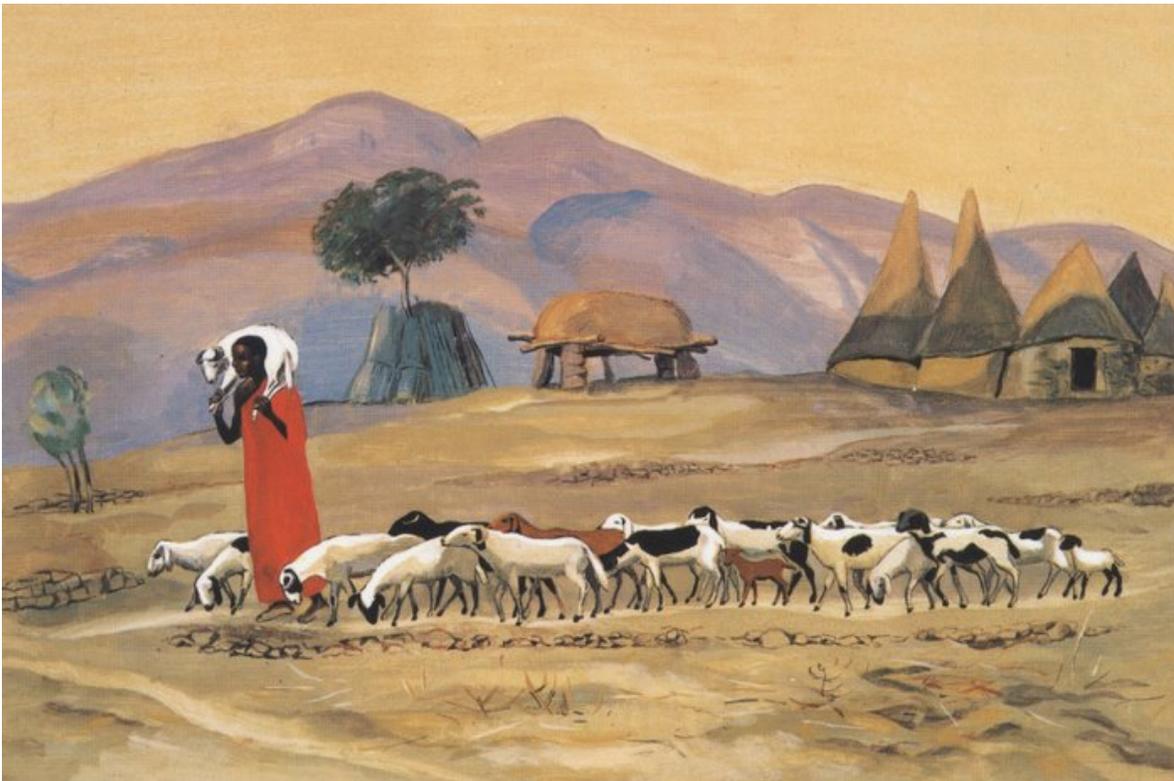


FRIENDS CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

An Open & Affirming Congregation



Jesus MAFA, *The Good Shepherd*. 1973

April 25, 2021

11:00am

Outdoor

WELCOME

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.

Eastertide

Easter is not just one day—it's a whole season. Throughout these 50 days, we celebrate and ponder the mystery of the resurrection and the promise of new life.

Words in **BOLD** are yours to speak out loud

****You are invited to stand**

Psalm for Meditation: Psalm 28 (NIV)

To you, Lord, I call;

you are my Rock,

do not turn a deaf ear to me.

For if you remain silent,

I will be like those who go down to the pit.

Hear my cry for mercy

as I call to you for help,

as I lift up my hands

toward your Most Holy Place.

Do not drag me away with the wicked,

with those who do evil,

who speak cordially with their neighbors

but harbor malice in their hearts.

Repay them for their deeds

and for their evil work;

repay them for what their hands have done

and bring back on them what they deserve.

Because they have no regard for the deeds of the Lord

and what his hands have done,

he will tear them down

and never build them up again.

Praise be to the Lord,

for he has heard my cry for mercy.

The Lord is my strength and my shield;

my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.

My heart leaps for joy,

and with my song I praise him.

The Lord is the strength of his people,

a fortress of salvation for his anointed one.

Save your people and bless your inheritance;

be their shepherd and carry them forever.

CHIMING OF THE TRINITY

WELCOME TO ONLINE WORSHIP

Rev. Trent Williams

PRELUDE & LIGHTING OF THE ALTAR CANDLES

****CALL TO WORSHIP**

Angela & Ryan Jackson

One: How do we come to know the love of God?

All: Not through word or speech alone!

One: The love of God is truth and action.

All: Embodied and incarnate.

One: Tangibly turning the world on end,

All: Their love is bold and brave.

One: Manifesting materially, that life may thrive today,

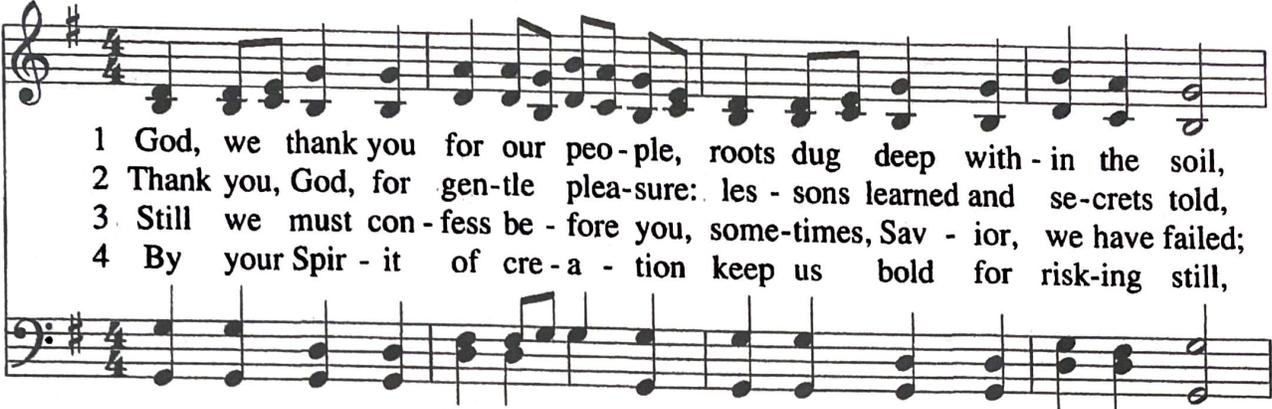
All: Their presence is a force.

One: Love is felt. Love is witnessed.

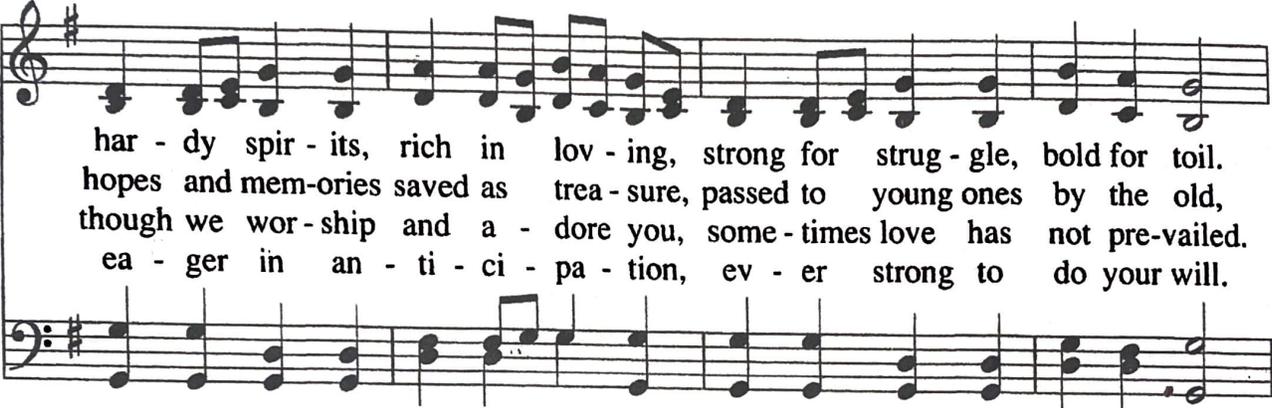
All: Love is experienced and encountered.

One: Thanks be to God who dwells in the flesh of the kind and the just.

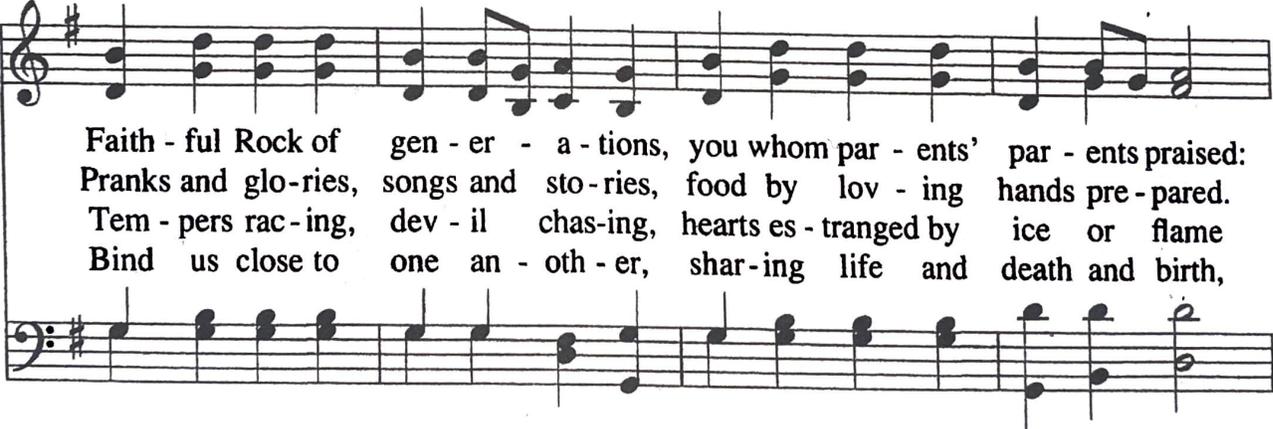
OPENING HYMN — God, We Thank You for Our People - Tune: Holy Manna



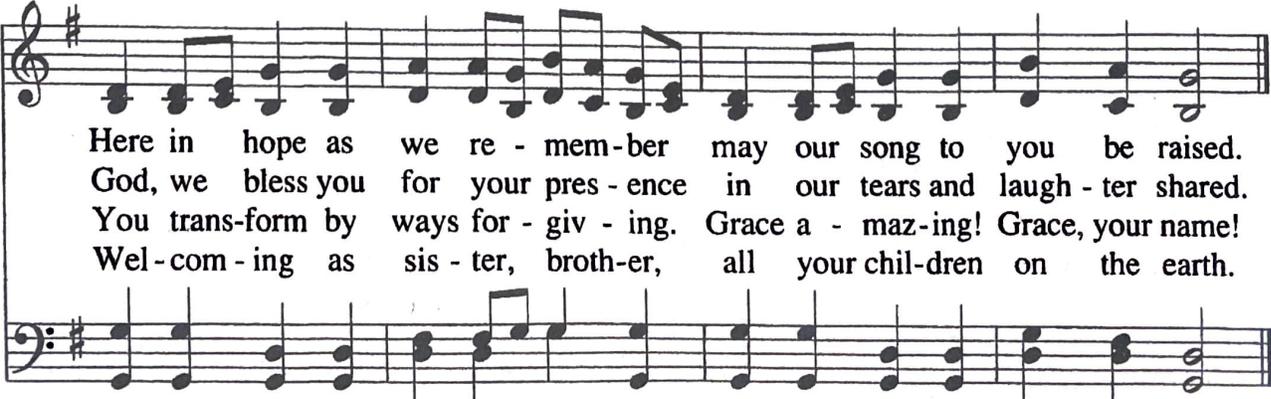
1 God, we thank you for our peo-ple, roots dug deep with - in the soil,
2 Thank you, God, for gen-tle plea-sure: les - sons learned and se-crets told,
3 Still we must con - fess be - fore you, some-times, Sav - ior, we have failed;
4 By your Spir - it of cre - a - tion keep us bold for risk-ing still,



har - dy spir - its, rich in lov - ing, strong for strug - gle, bold for toil.
hopes and mem-ories saved as trea - sure, passed to young ones by the old,
though we wor - ship and a - dore you, some - times love has not pre-vailed.
ea - ger in an - ti - ci - pa - tion, ev - er strong to do your will.



Faith - ful Rock of gen - er - a - tions, you whom par - ents' par - ents praised:
Pranks and glo-ries, songs and sto-ries, food by lov - ing hands pre - pared.
Tem - pers rac - ing, dev - il chas - ing, hearts es - tranged by ice or flame
Bind us close to one an - oth - er, shar - ing life and death and birth,



Here in hope as we re - mem - ber may our song to you be raised.
God, we bless you for your pres - ence in our tears and laugh - ter shared.
You trans - form by ways for - giv - ing. Grace a - maz - ing! Grace, your name!
Wel - com - ing as sis - ter, broth - er, all your chil - dren on the earth.

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Angela & Ryan Jackson

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Rev. Dr. Christine Tata

Based on the Epistle reading 1 Timothy 4:12-16:

Let no one look down on you because you are young, but be a consistent example for other believers in speech, in love, in life, in faith and in purity. Until I arrive, give attention to the public reading of scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Don't neglect the spiritual gift you received through the prophetic word when the presbyters laid their hands on you. Attend to your duties with great devotion, so that everyone can see your progress. Watch yourself and watch your teaching; persevere in both tasks. By doing so, you will bring Salvation to yourself and to all who hear you.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Rev. Trent Williams

PASSING OF THE PEACE

Rev. Trent Williams

One: The peace of Christ be with you all.

Many: And also with you!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rev. Trent Williams

INVITATION TO SHARE

Angela & Ryan Jackson

OFFERTORY

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

GivePlus Text to 833-421-0009

Venmo to 979-446-5746 or @friendsucc

DOXOLOGY

Hymn Tune No. 27

**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

Rev. Trent Williams

THE LORD'S PRAYER (*unison*)

Rev. Trent Williams

**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.**

HEBREW BIBLE READING — Ezekiel 34:25-31 (NRSV)

Rev. Trent Williams

I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild animals from the land, so that they may live in the wild and sleep in the woods securely. I will make them and the region around my hill a blessing; and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. The trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase. They shall be secure on their soil; and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars of their yoke, and save them from the hands of those who enslaved them. They shall no more be plunder for the nations, nor shall the animals of the land devour them; they shall live in safety, and no one shall make them afraid. I will provide for them a splendid vegetation so that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, and no longer suffer the insults of the nations. They shall know that I, the Lord their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, says the Lord God. You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture and I am your God, says the Lord God.

CHORAL ANTHEM — *You Raise Me Up (with Be Still, My Soul) - You Raise Me Up* Words and Music by Rolf Lovland and Brendan Graham; *Be Still, My Soul* Melody by Jean Sibelius, Words by Katharina A. von Schlegel, translated by Jane L. Borthwick; arranged by Tom Fettke

GOSPEL READING — Luke 15:1-10 (NRSV)

Rev. Dr. Christine Tata

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

So he told them this parable: “Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

“Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

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

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

THE MESSAGE

Rev. Dr. Christine Tata

MOMENT FOR REFLECTION

INVITATION TO MEMBERSHIP AT FRIENDS CHURCH

Rev. Trent Williams

CLOSING HYMN — Such Perfect Love My Shepherd Shows - Tune: Dominus Regit Me

1 Such per - fect love my Shep - herd shows, whose
 2 Where streams of liv - ing wa - ter flow, my
 3 When vain and fool - ish oft I strayed, you,
 4 I do not fear death's shad - owed vale when

good - ness fails me nev - er, Whose hand all things I
 lov - ing Shep-herd leads me, And where the ver - dant
 faith - ful Shep-herd, sought me, And on your shoul - der
 you are here be - side me; Your rod and staff and

need be - stows and watch - es me for - ev - er.
 pas - tures grow with food from heav - en feeds me.
 gent - ly laid, then home re - joic - ing brought me.
 strength pre - vail to com - fort and to guide me.

5 You spread a ta-ble in my sight,
 your gifts of grace be-stow-ing;
 And from your chal-ice I de-light
 to taste your mer-cy flow-ing.

6 And so through all the length of days
 your good-ness fails me nev-er;
 Good Shep-herd, may I sing your praise
 with-in your house for-ev-er.

POSTLUDE

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Instrumental Music:

Prelude: "Come, Thou Fount of Many Blessings" based on the tune NETTLETON,
arr. by Douglas E. Wagner

Offertory: "Brother James' Air" by James Leith Macbeth Bain, arr. by Dale Wood

Postlude: "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" by Martin Luther, arr. by Carol Tornquist

Scriptures for May 2, 2021: Psalm 68, II Samuel 9:1-13a, Mark 8:1-10

FIRST TIME AT FRIENDS? If you are visiting us today, please let us know. 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.

FRIENDS BOOK CLUB, Thursday, April 29, 6:30pm: The next Friends Book Club is *Thursday, April 29, at 6:30pm* by Zoom. Rev. Ron Petty will lead us in discussing the book, *Rabbi Jesus*, by Bruce Chilton. Please join us for a fun and informative discussion.

PLAYGROUND REJUVENATION - VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: We are seeking a few volunteers to form a committee to consider and plan a rejuvenation of the children's playground. The work would include planning any needed upgrades or changes in equipment and surface and establishing a budget. The budget would be included in our budget submission to the congregation for next year and if approved, next year would be the implementation phase. If you are interested in working on this committee, please email Susan Fontaine at svfontaine@gmail.com.

FOOD DISTRIBUTION , FRIDAY 3 pm: Friends Church and our neighbor church Peace Lutheran are working together to feed hungry folks from our community every Friday. Start 2021 off by volunteering to assist. Share an hour or more of your time between 3:00 and 6:30 pm. Let Anne Wehrly know when you would like to volunteer by emailing awehrly@suddenlink.net. Come to the Peace Lutheran parking lot where the distribution is happening. Wear your mask and prepare to make a tangible difference in the lives of those we are serving. Hope to see you there!

DONATIONS & VOLUNTEERS WELCOME TO PROVIDE FOOD FOR UNHOUSED NEIGHBORS: When the pandemic began, those who were involved with our Pilgrims in the Park ministry helped move those of our unhoused friends into a local motel for shelter. Friends Church stepped up to provide weekly food. We are unsure how long this ministry will continue. Currently, we have six friends for whom we are providing meals. How it works: Each week, we pack a selection of groceries and pick up donations at the food pantry at Peace Lutheran Church, then deliver them on Saturday. Anyone is welcome and encouraged to go with us to deliver! The more people who go, the more comfortable our friends will be.

How you can help: Food can be donated/delivered either to Charity Stokes or to Marisa Winking. Contact Charity at charityk.martin@gmail.com or 832-557-0085 for details. Please remember that our friends have limited fridge and room space to store food (mini-fridge) and only a microwave to heat food.

SOUL FRIENDS SMALL GROUPS: New small groups have begun, and there is still time to join one. Our small groups offer an opportunity for connection, building relationships, and deepening your spiritual growth. We currently have four groups available:

- Women's Group (for all women-identified persons)
- Men's Group (for all men-identified persons)
- Parent's Group
- LGBTQ+ Group

Contact Pastor Trent (pastortrent@friends-ucc.org) for more information. You can also indicate your interest here: bit.ly/soulfriendsgroups.

PLEASE JOIN US IN WELCOMING REV. DR. CHRISTINE TATA: As many of you will remember, our beloved Senior Pastor, Dan, took 1-month of his 3-months of earned sabbatical leave last summer. Since the remaining 2-months of this leave must be taken before September 1st, Senior Pastoral Relations has been working with Pastor Dan to make sure he gets this time of rest and renewal. We are excited to announce that during the two-month period of April 16th – June 16th Pastor Dan will be able to take sabbatical leave. A sabbatical is our gift to Dan to help care for him with as much depth and love as he cares for us.

Senior Pastor Relations is equally excited to introduce to you Rev. Dr. Christine Tata (pronounced Tāta) as the Acting Senior Pastor who will help shepherd our congregation with Pastor Trent during this time. Rev Tata comes to us from San Marcos and holds standing in the Heart of Texas Association of the South Central Conference. Her passions are closely aligned with Friends Church's core vision, mission, and values, including living daily in the real presence of God, building intentional small group ministries, and justice. Please help us welcome her with the extravagant hospitality we cherish.

The Rev. Dr. Christine Tata is a United Church of Christ minister who has served congregations in Denver, Dallas, and California. Most recently, she has been preaching virtually, delivering online services for progressive congregations to help them create sacred virtual spaces to meet the challenges of this pandemic year. Her years of ministry have been spread throughout a varied career that also includes the helping professions of human resources, education, and health care, and is rooted in her early love of the sacred spaces of theater—where the spoken and performative word mirrors the drama of the Word for humanity. With training in transitional ministry, she is pleased to be able to come over from her home in San Marcos to sojourn with Friends during this sabbatical time.

FRIENDS COVID DECISION METER, YELLOW: With a consistent trajectory of lower positivity rates, less hospitalizations, etc. locally, the church's Decision Meter, which determines our safety measures and protocols related to the pandemic, has gone down to yellow, which allows for us to have group gatherings onsite outdoors at Friends Church. Click [here](#) for more information on how yellow and the other color levels affect personal safety protocols, drop-in visitors, staff, etc.

OUTDOOR AND VIRTUAL SERVICES AT FRIENDS CHURCH: As more of our church members congregation and the wider community become fully vaccinated and covid cases continue going down in the coming months, we will be phasing into regathering in the sanctuary. As we remain vigilant in the meantime—loving one another and our neighbors by adhering to safety protocols—the worship services at Friends Church will be offered in two formats from week to week: outdoors and online. On the first and third Sundays of the month, outdoor services will be offered at 11am. Those outdoor services will also be livestreamed for online attendees. On all other Sundays (second, fourth, fifth), the worship services will be online only, streaming at 11am on the [Friends Church website](#), [Facebook](#), and [YouTube](#). **Note:** outdoor services depend on the weather, of course, and on the [Friends Church Decision Meter](#) being on “orange” or better.

SOCIAL JUSTICE CLASS, 10:00AM SUNDAY: The Social Justice Class at Friends Church has concluded its special study and will resume meeting at the regular time of 10am. For more information, please contact Jackie (jackiejowomack@gmail.com).

MORNING MANNA 10AM SUNDAY: Join us for our adult Bible study on Sunday morning at 10:00am on Zoom, Please follow the link, below. We will gather to reconnect, check in with each other, and bring ideas for what we'll study over the coming weeks. All are welcome. If you have any questions, contact Pastor Trent. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82444908275?pwd=VUxnK0tYV2EzRzJhYkkveFo3NFFDdz09>.

CHURCH DIRECTORY ONLINE (ChMS): Need a Friends Church online directory? Download the free Church Office Online app and contact the Church office for the domain name and password. It's an easy way to have quick access to the names and contact info for Friends Church people, as well as birthdays and anniversaries! Don't see your info in the online directory? Give us your updated information: office@friends-ucc.org.

FRIENDS CHURCH CARES FUND (FCCF): Friends Church recently received a donation of \$10,000 for the purpose of helping those suffering financial hardships resulting from COVID-19 measures. Friends Church members needing financial assistance are encouraged to request one-time assistance for up to \$1,500 from the FCCF. The FCCF request form can be found on the church's website (www.friends-ucc.org) or by contacting Church Council Vice Moderator Cathy Hansen at vice-moderator@friends-ucc.org. Requests are kept in discretion between the requester and the Vice Moderator, Treasurer, and Senior Pastor.

FRIENDS CHURCH CRISIS FUND: While the FCCF is set aside exclusively to assist with COVID-19-related hardships, the Crisis Fund, established several years ago, is designated to help Friends Church members in financial need for any reason. Should the FCCF run out, our congregation has this fund to further help one another. To contribute to the Crisis Fund, contact Treasurer Theresa Walker at treasurer@friends-ucc.org. To request Crisis Fund assistance, contact the pastors at pastor@friends-ucc.org or pastortrent@friends-ucc.org. Requests remain confidential between the requester and members of Church Council.

STAY CONNECTED WITH WHAT'S HAPPENING AT FRIENDS!: Subscribe to This Week at Friends published every Friday to your email address, and the E-Connection Newsletter published monthly to your email address. You can sign up on our website: www.friends-ucc.org or email the church office: office@friends-ucc.org. Please add e-connection@friends-ucc.org and office@friends-ucc.org to you email address book to ensure delivery.

UPDATE CONTACT INFORMATION: If you are not currently receiving Church email correspondence, and would like to, please send a message to the Church office with your name and email address: office@friends-ucc.org, and add e-connection@friends-ucc.org and office@friends-ucc.org to you email address book to ensure delivery.

FRIENDS CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Our Vision:

Rooted in the way of Christ, we strive to be a community of God's radical inclusion and extravagant welcome.

Our Mission:

United by the example of Jesus, we live faithfully, love limitlessly, and serve boldly.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

Online at 11:00am

FRIENDS CHURCH STAFF

The Rev. Dr. Dan De Leon, *Senior Pastor*
pastor@friends-ucc.org

The Rev. Trent Williams, *Associate Pastor*
pastortrent@friends-ucc.org

Chris Hoffman, *Director of Music Ministries*
choir@friends-ucc.org

Kathy Robbins, *Pianist*
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