



FRIENDS CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

An Open & Affirming Congregation



Gallen-Kallela, Akseli, 1865-1931. *Hand of Christ, The Palm of Peace*, 1897.
Tarvaspää (The Gallen-Kallela Museum), Espoo, Finland.

December 5, 2021

9:00am

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.

Second 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.

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

**You are invited to stand

Epistle for Meditation: Romans 8:18-25 (NRSV)

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Quote for Meditation:

"True peace is not merely the absence of tension: it is the presence of justice."

--Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

CHIMING OF THE TRINITY

WORDS OF WELCOME

Rev. Dr. Dan De Leon

**CALL TO WORSHIP & LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE OF PEACE

The Bentley Family

One: Advent is a time of wonder—the wonder of the surprising and remarkable Incarnation of God-with-us.

On this second Sunday of Advent,
we light this candle for peace and we wonder,

All: "If God is with us, why is there no peace?"

One: We light this candle for peace and we wonder,

All: "God is with us even when there is no peace!"

One: We light this candle for peace

All: and we know the wonder of the surprising and remarkable Incarnation, God-with-us; who strengthens us to work for justice and promises us peace.

**CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE — While We Are Waiting, Come - Tune: Waiting - verse two

2 With power and glo - ry, come;

with power and glo - ry, come.

Je - sus, our Lord, Em - man - u - el,

while we are wait - ing, come.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Brooke Dooley

Children are invited to come forward with their masks on and sit at the base of the sanctuary porch steps. 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!

**PASSING OF THE PEACE

Brooke Dooley

One: The peace of Christ be with you all.

Many: And also with you!

HEBREW SCRIPTURE READING – Genesis 17:15-22 (NRSV)

Rev. Trent Williams

God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her." Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, "Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" And Abraham said to God, "O that Ishmael might live in your sight!" God said, "No, but your wife Sarah shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. As for Ishmael, I have heard you; I will bless him and make him fruitful and exceedingly numerous; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year." And when he had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

SPECIAL MUSIC — *Ev'ry valley shall be exalted* from *Messiah* - George Frideric Händel

Chris Hoffman, *tenor*

GOSPEL READING – Luke 1:39-45 (NRSV)

Rev. Dr. Dan De Leon

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

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

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

THE MESSAGE

"The Presence of Tension"

Rev. Dr. Dan De Leon

MOMENT FOR REFLECTION

INVITATION TO SHARE

Kathryn Abbott

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**

**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 OBSERVANCE OF HOLY COMMUNION

Rev. Trent Williams, Brooke Dooley

****THE LORD'S PRAYER (*unison*)**

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.**

COMMUNITY LIFE THIS WEEK

Rev. Trent Williams, Brooke Dooley

****CLOSING HYMN — Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates - Tune: Truro**



1 Lift up your heads, O might-y gates; be-hold the glo - rious Rul - er waits!
2 Fling wide the por - tals of your heart; make it a tem - ple, set a - part
3 Re - deem - er, come! I o - pen wide my heart to you; here, Christ, a - bide!
4 So come, my Sov-ereign; en - ter in! Let new and no - bler life be - gin;



The Sov-ereign One is draw - ing near; the Sav - ior of the world is here.
From earth - ly use for heaven's em - ploy, a - dorned with prayer and love and joy.
Let me your in - ner pres - ence feel; your grace and love in me re - veal.
Your Ho - ly Spir - it guide us on, un - til the glo - rious crown be won.



****BENEDICTION**

Rev. Dr. Dan De Leon

POSTLUDE

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Instrumental Music:

Prelude: How Great Our Joy - Traditional German melody by Hugo Jüngst, arranged by Mary McDonald

Offertory: "Sleepers, Wake!" A Voice Astounds Us - based off of the tune "Wachet Auf" by Philip Nicolai, and harmonized by Johann Sebastian Bach; arranged by Gilbert M. Martin

Communion: Once in Royal David's City - Henry J. Gauntlett, arranged by Dan Forrest Jr.

Postlude: Ding Dong! Merrily On High (inspired by J. S. Bach's "Invention No. 8 in F Major") - Traditional French Carol, arranged by Faye López

Scriptures for next Sunday, December 12: Judges 13:2-7; Luke 1:46-56

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 bring to the baptismal font 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.

THIS THURSDAY, THE FRIENDS CHOIR CHRISTMAS CANTATA RETURNS – ONE NIGHT ONLY!
By Chris Hoffman, Director of Music Ministries: The Friends Church Choir's Christmas Cantata is back and in person! Mark your calendars to celebrate the joyous tradition, which will be ***this Thursday, December 9, at 7:30 pm***. Masks will be required of all attendees. This year, the Choir, alongside a ten-piece chamber orchestra, will be presenting Joseph M. Martin's "Let There Be Christmas." Bring your family and friends, and celebrate the return of a live Worship Through Music Service after 20 months of virtual music-making. There will even be moments where the Congregation will be invited to sing along. "Let There Be Christmas" indeed!

TODAY, CONGREGATIONAL MEETING, 12:30pm Sunday, December 5th :

Stay after the 11:00 am service for fellowship and snacks!

Attendance will be offered both in person and virtually by [Zoom](#) [Meeting ID: 895 8767 4222 Passcode: AllFriends].

The purpose of this meeting is to review and vote for the following:

1. The proposed 2022 Spending Plan (Statement of Faith and Mission)
2. The proposed title and position changes to the Associate Pastor role to Executive Pastor to begin January 1, 2022.

Printed copies will be available.

TODAY, GUATEMALAN HANDMADE CRAFTS: Guatemalan Handmade Crafts will be on sale at Friends Church today, Sunday December 5 before and after worship (8:30am. to 1:00pm). This is a great way to find some Christmas presents! The Justice and Mission committee is sponsoring this sale. All profits go to benefit the education of Guatemalan children. Barb Lorraine from Friends has worked for many years with IMPAVIM which is a cooperative of women in Guatemala who produce the Fair Trade Crafts. Pass the word on to your friends!

WORSHIP SERVICES NEED YOUR HELP: We need greeters for the 9am and/or 11am services and help with communion. “If I volunteer, what exactly would I be doing?” Greeters for the 9am service arrive at Friends Church at 8:30am to take three flags to the street (a sign that we are open and would love guests to join us for worship!), put colored dots on the floor for our kids to sit on during the children’s message, and then greet people at the sanctuary door with a worship guide, do a headcount of service attendees, and, at the end of the service, take the offerings and Welcome and Pray cards from the baptismal font to the church office. Greeters for the 11am service arrive at Friends Church at 10:30am to replenish the chair backs with cards and pens as needed, put colored dots on the floor for our kids to sit on during the children’s message, and then greet people at the sanctuary door with a worship guide, do a headcount of service attendees, and, at the end of the service, take the offerings and Welcome and Pray cards from the baptismal font to the church office. Communion volunteers (AKA communion stewards) for the 9am service prep the communion trays with cups of wine and juice and the communion plates with cubes or wafers of bread. Additionally, one round loaf of bread, a pitcher of juice, and an empty cup to pour the juice into are prepared for the ministers to break the bread and pour the cup at the blessing of the elements. The whole process takes 25-30 minutes, so it is recommended that you either arrive well in advance of the service for which you are volunteering to prep communion, or that you come to the church to do this prior to Sunday morning (no earlier than the Friday before, as the wine and juice does not keep longer than three days after being poured). Communion volunteers for the 11am service ensure the communion is “reset” for the 11am service, and then put away everything after the service concludes. To volunteer and get more info about these urgently needed tasks, contact Worship Committee Chair Ryan Womack at worship@friends-ucc.org. Thank you for your generous offering of time and care for our worship community’s needs.

CHILDREN’S CHRISTMAS PAGEANT: Don’t miss the Friends Christmas Pageant next Sunday, December 12th.

JOIN FRIENDS! NEW MEMBER SUNDAY, December 19th: At Friends Congregational Church, membership is not about joining an institution, but about being a part of a movement of people committed to the Christ-centered work of doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God and one another. If you are interested in joining this community of faith on our next New Member Sunday, becoming a member of Friends Church in the 11am service on Sunday, December 19, contact Senior Pastor Dan De Leon at pastor@friends-ucc.org, or Associate Pastor Trent Williams at pastortrent@friends-ucc.org.

FRIENDS CHURCH ANGEL TREE—UPDATE: To date all 60 children/youth from the Brazos County Child Welfare Board have been sponsored! Thank you Friends Church! The link to see when you can deliver presents to the church is

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f0448ada728a1fd0-friends1>. Gifts may also be delivered on Sunday before and after worship. A generous monetary donation has allowed us to take on a few more children from the Child Welfare Board. We just need someone to shop for the gift items for the newly added children. If you would like to be a shopper please contact us at awehrly@suddenlink.net.

Remember, 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 is under the Christmas trees in the narthex.

ADVENT & ANNUNCIATION – SCRIPTURE SELECTIONS FOR WORSHIP AT FRIENDS CHURCH: In her book, *The Women's Lectionary for the Whole Church*, Dr. Wilda Gafney, Professor of Hebrew Bible at Brite Divinity School, writes, "Annunciations communicate an understanding of God involved in history and deeply involved in the lineage—ancestral and descendent—of God's people. Mary's annunciation and the story of Jesus' first advent stand on that foundational understanding." For the season of Advent and for Christmas Eve, we will delve into this theme of annunciation and the lessons they teach us as we prepare for and celebrate the coming of the Christ child. Utilizing scriptures from *The Women's Lectionary for the Whole Church*, **the Four Sundays of Advent (Nov. 28, Dec. 5, 12, 19) and Christmas Eve** will offer us glimpses into the annunciation stories that culminate with the birth of Jesus: Hagar, Sarah, Hannah, Elizabeth, and Mary. Dr. Gafney writes, "A significant aim of this project is increased biblical literacy, beginning with scripture's most neglected population." After a year of learning from scriptures that took us beyond the lectionary, we stand prepped and ready to learn from these ancient, semi-familiar stories in anticipation of Christmas. As Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber writes, "Wil Gafney has offered the church a treasure in this Women's Lectionary, and we would do well to make use of it quickly and thoroughly." Here we go!

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

9:00am In-Person – 11:00am In-Person & Online

FRIENDS CHURCH STAFF

The Rev. Dr. Dan De Leon *he/him/his*, Senior Pastor
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The Rev. Trent Williams *he/him/his*, Associate Pastor
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