



Friends Church

An Open & Affirming Congregation



Dances of Joy

Hannah Garrity, inspired by Luke 1:39-45

December 22, 2024

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 & Tyler Baker-Wilkinson
Greeters: Jan and Kristen Hibbetts & Eli Vasquez

Next Sunday, Dec 29:
Lay Leader: Tom Vogel
Greeter: Dwight Roblyer

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.

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.

QUOTE FOR MEDITATION:

"I've read the Magnificat many times, but only recently have I started reading it for what it is: a protest song."

Rev. T. Denise Anderson

CHIMING OF THE TRINITY

WORDS OF WELCOME

Trent Williams

PRELUDE & LIGHTING OF THE ALTAR CANDLES

***CALL TO WORSHIP (RESPONSIVE)**

Tyler Baker-Wilkinson

One: We are seeking—

**All: deeper faith, a place to belong,
the feeling that God is here in this room.**

One: We are seeking—

**All: joy that overflows, the movement of the Spirit,
a hand to hold, when alone in the dark.**

One: We are seeking—

**All: the freedom to be, the courage to love,
the conviction to act in the face of injustice.**

One: We are seeking, but here in this space,

All: We are found.

One: Take a deep breath. This is your sanctuary.

All: God is here. We are found. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN FOR LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE -**
While We Are Waiting, Come

Waiting

1 While we are wait - ing, come;
2 With power and glo - ry, come;
3 Come, Sav - ior, quick - ly come;

while we are wait - ing, come.
with power and glo - ry, come.
come, Sav - ior, quick - ly come.

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

while we are wait - ing, come.

***INVOCATION**

Tyler Baker-Wilkinson

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Sue Ambrus

Children in the sanctuary are invited to come to the front. 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.**

CALL TO CONFESSION

Dan De Leon

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (UNISON)

Dan De Leon

God of safe spaces,
we wish we were more like Mary,
who in the face of great change, walked to the shelter she needed.
Too often we wait silently for the world to change around us
instead of speaking up for the things we need.
Forgive us for failing to care for ourselves the way you would care for us.
God of safe places, we wish we were more like Elizabeth,
who greeted Mary with laughter and contagious joy.
How many people have crossed our doorstep
and how many times have we failed to see them?
Give us the courage of Mary, and the grace of Elizabeth.
Gratefully we pray, amen.

WORDS OF FORGIVENESS (RESPONSIVE)

Dan De Leon

One: Family of faith,
even if we miss the person standing on our doorstep, even if we fail to care for
ourselves the way God would care for us, we if we forget and ignore, turn away
and shut down, God still loves us. There is nothing we can do to lose God's love.
Rest in this promise:

All: If we get lost, we will be found.

One: If we mess up, we are forgiven.

All: If we withhold love, God is lavish in loving us.

One: We are claimed. We are loved. We are forgiven.

All: Thanks be to God. Amen.

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

Dan De Leon

One: The peace of Christ be with you all.

Many: **And also with you!**

*HYMN OF RESPONSE: No. 105 Gentle Joseph, Joseph Dear

Joseph Lieber, Joseph Mein

HEBREW SCRIPTURE READING

Micah 5:2-5a CEB

Tyler Baker-Wilkinson

As for you, Bethlehem of Ephrathah, though you are the least significant of Judah's forces, one who is to be a ruler in Israel on my behalf will come out from you. His origin is from remote times, from ancient days. Therefore, he will give them up until the time when she who is in labor gives birth. The rest of his kin will return to the people of Israel. He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. They will dwell secure, because he will surely become great throughout the earth; he will become one of peace.

CHORAL ANTHEM: Long-Expected Dawn – Karen Marroli (Lauren Dorsett, flute)

When our hearts are troubled and in need of light, and the darkness deepens 'midst the thickening night, we await your coming as our souls press on toward a long-expected dawn.

When our hearts are broken and in need of balm, you send your promise, your hope and calm. We await your presence as we travel on toward a long-expected dawn.

O Light of Hope! Break forth! Appear and shatter all the darkness here! Oh, let your advent herald clear an end to sorrow and to fear!

You come from heaven to make straight the way, birthing hope from sorrow, changing night to day. Lord, walk among us as we journey on toward a long-expected dawn, toward a long-expected dawn, toward a long-expected dawn.

GOSPEL READING

Luke 1:39-45, 46-55, NRSV

Brooke Dooley

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 had 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." And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and his descendants forever."

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

INVITATION TO SHARE

Tyler Baker-Wilkinson

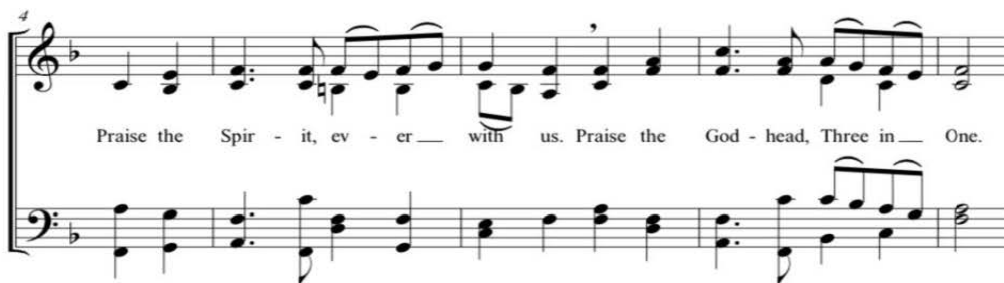
OFFERTORY

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-prepare the way! Ad - vent leads to Christ - mas Day!

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION & THE LORD'S PRAYER

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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Trent Williams

*CLOSING HYMN - No. 106 My Heart Sings Out with Joyful Praise

Marias Lovsång

*BENEDICTION

Brooke Dooley

POSTLUDE

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Instrumental Music:

Prelude: The Holly and the Ivy - Traditional English Carol, arranged by Bernadine Johnson
Offertory: Infant Holy, Infant Lowly - Polish Carol, setting by John Leavitt
Postlude: Joseph, Dear, Oh Joseph Mine - arranged by Chip Davis

First Sunday after Christmas, December 29, 2024: Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52

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

HELP PREP FOR CHRISTMAS EVE DEC 22: Immediately following the 11am worship service on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 22, the Worship Committee will be prepping for the Christmas Eve service by changing the banners from purple to white, setting up candles, and assembling lumarias to illuminate the walkway leading up to the sanctuary. A few volunteers will make this hospitable task go much quicker. For more information contact Worship Committee Chair Charity Stokes: worship@friends-ucc.org.

CHRISTMAS EVE AT FRIENDS CHURCH – HAND BELLS, COMMUNION, & CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT, DEC 24: Beginning at 6:30pm on Christmas Eve, the handbell 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.

CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED & UPDATES, DEC 25-27: The church office will be closed next week Wednesday, Dec 25 through Friday, Dec 27. Please send Michael any updates for worship and marketing before the holiday. The office will also close at 2:00pm on Tuesday, Dec 24.

CHRISTMASTIDE REST FOR 9AM SERVICE, DEC 29: The 9am worship service will not be offered on Sundays, Dec. 29 and Jan. 5. During Christmastide, join us for the 11am service in person or online.

FAMILY PROMISE DEC 29-JAN 5: Friends Church's week to host at the Family Promise Center is coming up, starting Sunday, December 29th. We will be providing groceries and 5 nights of meals, Dec 29, 30, 31 and Jan 1, 2. No overnight volunteers will be needed this time around. Currently, there is a family of 6 (a mom and 5 children ages 1-8) in the program. If you would like to be a part of this vital ministry, opportunities to learn more about the Family Promise program and to sign up to volunteer, will be available in the fellowship area after worship this Sunday, December 29th. Questions or offers to volunteer can be directed to Anne Wehrly at awehrly@suddenlink.net or Sally Manthei at manthei_sally@aol.com.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FAIR TRADE CRAFT SALE UPDATE: A special thank you to Friends Church for coming out to the Fair Trade craft sale held Dec. 7th & 8th. Our United for a Better Life purchases directly support educational and medical programs in the impoverished community of La Esperanza, located in Guatemala City. A record high of \$2, 665 was raised this year through our sale. Way to go Friends!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR YOUTH GROUP'S 2025 MISSION TRIP PLANNING TEAM: Do you love hearing from the Friends Youth Group each year about the great work they do on their Mission Trip? How'd you like to be part of the team that ensures our Youth have the best experience possible? We are currently in need of volunteers to serve on the Planning Team for the Youth Group's 2025 Mission Trip to Denver. This includes planning fundraisers, travel, and fun activities while in Colorado. Reach out to Pastor Brooke at pastorbrooke@friends-ucc.org to be part of this important ministry.

FRIENDS GREETERS NEEDED: Join our Friends Church greeter team! We are in need of additional folks to help welcome people on Sunday mornings and make our worship services flow smoothly. If you are interested in learning more, reach out to Worship Committee chair Charity Stokes at worship@friends-ucc.org. You can also sign up online here: bit.ly/FriendsGreeter.

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS NEEDED: We have all the Sunday school classes covered but are still looking for volunteers who could be called when teachers are out of town to be substitutes. Please let Pastor Dan or Abby Burley, Christian_ed@friends-ucc.org, know if we can add you to our list.

MIGRANT JUSTICE NETWORK FORMING IN BCS: The Brazos Sanctuary Coalition (BSC), formed by Friends Church and other churches, non-profits and individuals in 2017, is re-organizing as the Migrant Justice Network (MJN) in preparation for the challenges the community may face in the coming months. The MJN is an interfaith group standing publicly in solidarity with members of our community at risk for detention and deportation. We will serve as witness to the injustices of the immigration system by accompanying and supporting our immigrant brothers and sisters and working to keep families safe and together. If you would like to be informed and updated on our plans and opportunities for you to contribute and participate, beginning in January 2025, please email migrantjusticenetwork@gmail.com and we will add you to the announcements list.

GIVE TO THE CHRISTMAS FUND: Each year, Friends Church members participate in giving to the Christmas Fund of the United Church of Christ, one of the four special mission offerings of the UCC that members from across the nation contribute towards. For over 100 years, The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees from across the United Church of Christ, providing emergency grants, supplementation for health care, and Christmas “thank you” gift checks to lower-income retired ministers. Please contribute during our services on Christmas Eve or December 29, or through our website, and show our Friends Church generosity to those who have ministered to so many.

OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE AND SHARE

SUPPORT OUR PODCAST: Help us spread the good word! Share this week’s sermon with those you love with our “Friends Congregational Church Sermons” podcast, available wherever you can find podcasts! Easily access and publicize our mission to follow the model of Jesus: to live faithfully, love limitlessly, and serve boldly. With over 100 episodes published (since Advent of last year) we’ve expanded (since Eastertide this year) our efforts to include the wider library of sermons offered before this podcast kicked off. We would love to have your support by either showing this podcast to friends and loved ones, and/or contributing your voice to introduce an episode. Volunteers can reach out to av@friends-ucc.org (Jeremy) if interested, or you might get approached after service. Recording takes less than 10 minutes and is almost entirely scripted.

Be a Greeter and Communion Steward: To help in the 9am and 11am services, please contact Worship Committee Chair Charity Stokes: 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 school year. 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: "All I need is coffee; all we need are volunteers to make it!"

Sign up via sheet on kitchen counter, at bit.ly/friendschurchcoffee or email Jan at Fellowship@friends-ucc.org

Be a Curbside Steward: Recycling occurs once every two weeks early on Fridays and trash pick-up is weekly, early on Mondays. **SAVE THE DATE** 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.

SUNDAY SCHOOL BREAK, DEC 29: Sunday School will be on Winter Break on December 29th and January 5th. Classes will resume on Sunday, January 12th at 10:00 am. We wish everyone a joyful and restful holiday season and look forward to seeing you in the new year!

CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED, JAN 1: The church office will be closed on Wednesday, January 1 for New Years Day. Normal business hours will resume on Thursday, January 2.

FIRST FRIDAY WITH FRIENDS, JAN 3: First Friday with Friends is held in conjunction with Downtown Bryan's First Friday activities. We have a meet up at Blackwater Draw and always have a few people there for the 5:30-7:30 timeframe. Some folks stay at Blackwater all evening and others stop by on their way to or from dining and playing in downtown Bryan.

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

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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.