



Friends Church

An Open & Affirming Congregation



*“In the Time of Harmony: The Joy of Life--Sunday by the Sea”
Paul Signac, 1895-1896*

December 21, 2022
6:30pm
Longest Night Service

WELCOME TO FRIENDS CHURCH!

We are honored that you have chosen to spend your Wednesday night 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 tonight, please let us know. Welcome cards are located in the chair backs to fill out and leave in the offering plate when we depart from tonight's service. If you are joining us online, 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.

The Longest Night:

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Matthew 5:4). The Christmas season tends to be marked by happiness and expressions of good cheer. It is a time for family and friends to gather, and for congregations to worship in a spirit of joy. However, this time of joy-filled expectation often overshadows the pain and loneliness many experience during this season. Longest Night or Blue Christmas services are held on or close to the Winter Solstice, December 21. Retired United Methodist Church minister Daniel Benedict writes, “There is an interesting convergence for this day as it is also the traditional feast day for Saint Thomas the Apostle. This linkage invites making some connections between Thomas’ struggle to believe the tale of Jesus’ resurrection, the long nights just before Christmas, and the struggle with darkness and grief faced by those living with loss.”

WORDS OF WELCOME

Dan De Leon

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Dan De Leon

One: In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
All things were made by God, and without God nothing came to be.
What came to be through God was life,
and this life was the light of the world.

All: **The Light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it.**

*OPENING HYMN: NCH No. 133 - O Little Town of Bethlehem

*INVOCATION

Brooke Dooley

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

Brooke Dooley

HEBREW SCRIPTURE READING: Ecclesiastes 3:1-11, NRSV

Grace Jackson

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace. What gain have the workers from their toil? I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with.

He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

RESPONSIVE READING OF PSALM 23

Kristin Harper

One: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

All: **God makes me lie down in green pastures;
They lead me beside still waters;
They restore my soul.**

One: God leads me in right paths for Their name's sake.

All: **Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil;
for you are with me; your rod and your staff— they comfort me.**

One: You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

All: **Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.**

HEBREW SCRIPTURE READING: Isaiah 40:1-5, NRSV

Mo Bertrand

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

GOSPEL READING: Luke 1:46-56, NRSV

Martha Newsome

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 to his descendants forever." And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

LITANY FOR LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLES (RESPONSIVE)

One: This candle represents our suffering and the suffering of the world.
In the light of God's love, we claim God's gift of truth.

There is no need to hide or deny. God welcomes us as we are.

All: Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and in need.
(Psalm 86:1)

**O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here, until the son of God appear;
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

One: This candle represents our suffering and the suffering of the world.
In the light of God's love, we claim God's gift of lament.

We recognize our wounds and cry out to God.

We accept God's invitation to express every feeling and question.

**All: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from helping me,
from the words of my groaning?
O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.**
(Psalm 22:1-2)

**O come thou Wisdom from on high, and order all things far and nigh;
To us the path of knowledge show, and help us in that way to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

One: This candle represents our suffering and the suffering of the world.
In the light of God's love, we claim God's gift of courage.

Courage to be honest, to seek help, to comfort one another.

Courage to dare to love and dream again.

**All: The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts;
so I am helped, and my heart exults,
and with my song I give thanks to him.**
(Psalm 28:7)

**O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thine Advent here;
Love stir within the womb of night, and death's own shadows put to flight.**

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

One: This candle represents our suffering and the suffering of the world.
In the light of God's love, we claim God's gift of hope.
God is good. God is strong. God is near,
leading us to a day without tears and pain, without sin and death.
Healing and deliverance are coming; if not now, then on that day.

All: **By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance,
O God of our salvation;
you are the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.**
(Psalm 65:5)

**O come, Desire of nations bind all peoples in one heart and mind;
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease; fill the whole world with heaven's peace.**

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Trent Williams

One: Lord, hear our prayer,
All: **And in Your merciful love, answer.**

INSTRUCTIONS FOR LIGHTING CANDLES TO SHARE OUR PRAYERS

PASTORAL PRAYER & 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.**

A POEM: "FIRST COMING," BY MADELEINE L'ENGLE

Dan De Leon

*CLOSING HYMN: Glory to God No. 6II - Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

1 Joy - ful, joy - ful, we a - dore thee, God of glo - ry, Lord of love!
2 All thy works with joy sur-round thee; earth and heaven re - flect thy rays;
3 Mor-tals, join the hap-py cho-rus which the morn-ing stars be-gan.

Hearts un - fold like flowers be - fore thee, o - pening to the sun a - bove.
stars and an - gels sing a - round thee, cen - ter of un - bro - ken praise.
Love di - vine is reign - ing o'er us, join - ing all in heav-en's plan.

Melt the clouds of sin and sad-ness; drive the storms of doubt a - way.
Field and for - est, vale and moun-tain, flower-y mead-ow, flash - ing sea,
Ev - er sing-ing, march we on-ward, vic - tors in the midst of strife.

Giv - er of im - mor - tal glad-ness, fill us with the light of day.
chant - ing bird and flow-ing foun-tain, call us to re - joice in thee.
Joy - ful mu - sic leads us sun-ward in the tri-umph song of life.

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

Trent Williams

SPECIAL MUSIC: The Yearning

POSTLUDE

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

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

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