



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

*No matter who you are, or
where you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here!*



FirstCongregationalUCCIndy



FCINDY DOT ORG

www.fcindy.org
317.257.5397

7171 N. Pennsylvania St.
Indianapolis, IN 46240

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Welcome to your Spiritual Home!

We celebrate being a Just Peace making, Green for care of Creation, and WISE (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive and Engaged) for mental health church, with an Open and Affirming covenant supporting the LGBTQAAL+ community.

Whether you choose to join us online or in-person, we believe we are called together by Jesus to be a transforming presence for God in the world. **We are a place to belong, a place to heal and a place to love.** At First Congregational we recognize God as a loving, creating, all-encompassing Spirit who is not limited by usual human boundaries. Therefore, we practice the use of inclusive, expansive, and non-gendered language when speaking of and to God.

We welcome all who worship with us today and include **all ages** in our hybrid worship service. We invite guests and members to fill out a Welcome/Prayer card found in the pew holder, and put it in the offering plate. Children are invited to play quietly in the “pryground” at the front of the church, or use a “Quiet Bag” found in the Narthex.

***Disclaimer:** Today’s worship service is being live-streamed. While the focus will be on the worship leaders, anything you say or do may be on film. If you have any questions or need to ensure you are not on camera please speak with our minister.

Pastoral Care: You may reach out to Pastor Sarah for Pastoral Care. She may be reached at (386) 478-9012 or pastorsarah@fcindy.org.

In-Person Office Hours: Cassidy (admin) is in office 9-12 on Thursday, meeting with Pastor Sarah by appointment.

Out of concern for community health, we request that you remain up to date with your vaccinations. Mask as needed. Please stay home if you feel unwell.

We celebrate our worship leaders today:

Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund (she/her), Preacher

Sean Baker (he/him), Music Director

Scott Semester (he/him), Worship Song Leader

Mayflower Singers

Ben James (he/him), Media Technician

Judy Fletcher and Scott Semester, Liturgists

DECEMBER 10, 2023

11:00 AM

*Please speak the **bold**-printed words in unison.*

Asterisk () indicates those who choose to may stand in body/spirit.*

PRELUDE

The Star Carol

Hutson, Burt

INTROIT

The Universe Is Bending

Mayflower Singers

Entering Into the Sacred

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

TRUMPET FANFARE

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: We gather together to seek a sign of peace.

All: The herald speaks and proclaims that the Realm of God has come near.

One: Some people think they can buy peace or guarantee their own safety at the expense of others.

All: Heralds of peace remind us that true peace is only found through justice and love.

One: We come to hear God's hope, grounded in mercy and possibility.

All: As we balance between shadows and light, we await the birth of the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and gathers us together in community

OPENING PRAYER

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

All: People: God who comes near to us, we confess to the times we do not seek or create peace with our thoughts, words, and deeds. Sometimes we use anger as a weapon. We think our status or privilege will save us. We struggle to admit when we are wrong. As a society we claim to want peace, but we perpetuate systems of injustice and oppression that only lead to war and destruction. We shrink from words of judgement and worry more about ourselves than our neighbors. Show us a better way is possible. Send us heralds of peace and help us to listen to them. Let our lives and our community of faith bear fruit so that all will know the possibility of peace and hope in our time. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

PEACE MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION

*SONG OF CENTERING #131 It Came upon the Midnight Clear *New Century Hymnal*

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

SCRIPTURE HERALD

Matthew 3:1-12

Judy Fletcher

MODERN HERALD

Scott Semester

RESPONSE TO THE READINGS

One: The Holy One is trying to speak to us now.

All: We struggle to hear God's good news.

One: The Word of God is here for us today.

All: We will focus ourselves on the peace of God. Amen.

MESSAGE

The Heralds of Peace

Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund

*SONG OF REFLECTION #117 Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates

New Century Hymnal

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE & JOYS AND CONCERNS

MEDITATION

PASTORAL PRAYER

PRAYER OF OUR SAVIOR (from UCC Book of Worship)

Our God in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

PRAYER RESPONSE

Mayflower Singers

OFFERTORY INVITATION

INTERLUDE

O Little Town of Bethlehem

arr. Baker

*DOXOLOGY *Song of Thanks*

All praise to God we now do sing.

Our gifts this Advent now we bring.

This waiting time of peace we share,

As for the Christ our hearts prepare.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

People: Generous God, you have given us the gift of peace and so we give back hoping to share that gift with the rest of creation. As you have offered us grace and hope, we want to do the same. Accept these offerings of love that they might help transform the world into a more peaceful and just place. Amen.

COMMUNION PRAYER

One: The God of peace be with you.

All: And also with you.

One: Lift up your hearts to God as you listen for a herald of peace.

All: Let us find harmony together at God's table.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

All: God of Peace, we thank you for this taste of your Realm. May you continue to come near. May we listen for your heralds of peace. May this meal fortify us to be heralds of peace to a world still struggling to see through the shadows into the light. Amen.

*SONG OF SENDING #212 Go Out Now in Peace *Sing! Prayer and Praise*

*BENEDICTION

One: Hark! Be on the look out for heralds of good news!

All: We will watch and wait for God's heralds.

One: Hark! Pay attention for signs of God's peace.

All: We will seek peace in ourselves and in God's world.

One: Hark! Go in God's light and peace. Amen.

BLESSING SONG

The Universe Is Bending

Mayflower Singers

POSTLUDE

Patapan

Bernard de La Monnoye

Music for Sending Forth

Opportunities for Giving, Sharing, Fellowship and Fun!

TODAY: Special Congregational Meeting, Dec 10, 12:45: On Sunday, December 10, we will have a pitch-in lunch following worship, and then have a special congregational meeting at 12:45. The purpose of the meeting is to vote on a new Constitution and Bylaws for our church. Our current Constitution requires that any changes be approved by a three-fourths vote of those present and voting, and that this will be the only business item discussed at this meeting. We hope you can be there! Copies of the final proposal are available in the Narthex, or you can see your epistle. Please let the CBL Team of Wendy Baldwin, Steve Coomer, Steve Leatherman, and Pastor Sarah know of any questions or comments that you have.

Are You Considering Membership at First Congregational UCC? New Member Sunday is December 17, 2023! For more information or to become a member, email Pastor Sarah at PastorSarah@FCIndy.org

Because of you, our church changes lives - This is the theme for our Annual Campaign for 2024. While there are many ways to support the congregation, our annual campaign provides a chance to think about the choices we make with our money, time, and talent in support of First Congregational. Prayerfully consider all the ways that our church blesses your life and the lives of others, and **respond by turning in your pledge and Time & Talent cards by today, December 10.** You can put them in the offering plate during worship or mail them to the church. Thank you to all who contribute in so many ways to our ministries!

Cards to Our Church Family – Please sign the cards on our “card stand”, for those celebrating birthdays, or in need of prayers.

Food Donations to Northside Pantry – Help those with hunger insecurity by bringing donations of canned or boxed food, and place in the baskets in the Narthex.

Sunday Mornings at 10:00 AM – Several options are available on Sundays before worship. Join our Adult Ed group for thoughtful study and discussion (upstairs at church). Or go to choir practice to rehearse for that morning’s singing; all skill levels welcome!

Spiritual Support Group, Thursdays at 5:00pm (Zoom) – This group openly invites anyone seeking spiritual care concerning well-being. Contact Pastor Sarah at pastorsarah@fcindy.org, or 386-478-9012. *****This group will only be meeting on the first Thursday of each month.**



Thank You for Your Financial Gifts! Our current Covenant Outreach focus is related to our Just Peace Covenant which includes supporting the following organizations: Faith in Indiana, Peace Learning Center, Exodus Refugee Immigration and Family Promise.



**EXODUS
REFUGEE**
The life ahead.



Gifts of single dollars, or those designed to Covenant Outreach, are divided evenly to these groups, unless otherwise specified. Also, your pledge or undesignated gifts are greatly appreciated to support the mission and ministries funded by First Congregational's operating budget. You can place gifts in the offering plate, mail a check to the church, or give online at www.fcindy.org

Mental Health Support:

The 988 Lifeline: 988 is now active across the United States. (call or text) **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI.ORG):** information and referral services: 1-800-950-NAMI (6264) **The Trevor Project hotline** offers support for LGBTQIA+ youth and families struggling with mental health challenges at 1-866-4-U-TREVOR (488-7386) and www.theTrevorProject.org

THIS WEEK AT FC INDY:

Tuesday, December 12	3:00 PM	Staff Meeting (Zoom)
Tuesday, December 12	3:30 PM	Worship and Faith Meeting
Thursday, December 14	11:45 AM	Women's Lunch
Thursday, December 14	1:00 PM	Men's Lunch
Sunday, December 17	10:00 AM	Adult Education
Sunday, December 17	11:00 AM	Worship (In-Person, YouTube, FB)
Sunday, December 17	11:00 AM	New Member Sunday!

Today's Readings

SCRIPTURE HERALD: Matthew 3:1-12

At this time John the Baptizer appeared in the desert of Judea, proclaiming,

“Change your hearts and minds, for the reign of heaven is about to break in upon you!”

It was John that the prophet Isaiah described when he said, “A herald’s voice cries in the desert: ‘Prepare the way of our God, make straight the paths of God!’”

John was clothed in a garment of camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist.

Grasshoppers and wild honey were his food. At that time, Jerusalem, all Judea and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him. John baptized them in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins. When he saw that many of the Pharisees and Sadducees were coming to be baptized, John said to them,

“You pack of snakes! Who told you to flee from the coming wrath? Give some evidence that you mean to reform! And don’t pride yourselves on the claim, ‘Sarah and Abraham are our parents.’ I tell you, God from these very stones!

“Even now the ax is laid to the root of the tree. Every tree that is not fruitful will be cut down and thrown into the fire. I will baptize you in water if you have a change of heart, but the One who will follow me is more powerful than I. I’m not fit even to untie the sandals of the Coming One! That One will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire, whose winnowing-fan will clear the threshing floor. The grain will be gathered into the barn, but the chaff will be burned in unquenchable fire.”

MODERN HERALD

From In God's Time: An Advent Calendar

Jan Sutch Pickard (editor), Wild Goose Publications, 2022 (Adapted)

God-with-us, you know that, right now,
we are waiting:
confused, stumbling, like people wandering in the dark;
stubborn, steadfast, like those who believe in justice;
expectant, hopeful, like a woman about to give birth.
We are waiting,
we are wondering.

We are trying to discern whether it is your time,
and the signs of that time:
swirling clouds, political upheaval, breaking buds
or a refugee baby crying in the cold.

We are wondering,
we are waiting.
And, God-with-us,

And, we know that you are waiting, too:
waiting for us to see the things that make for peace:
waiting for us to know the time and to seize the moment;
waiting for us to recognize your presence,
to hear your call and to find the courage to respond.
The world is in your keeping, God,
are we keeping you waiting?

Priests for Equality. The Inclusive Bible. Sheed & Ward. Kindle Edition.



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