

December 8, 2024

WELCOME TO ADVENT AT
FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST



ADVENT IS THE SEASON WHEN WE
PREPARE AND AWAKEN TO THE SIGNS
OF GOD'S LOVE AND JUSTICE
UNFOLDING IN OUR MIDST. WE AWAIT
THE BIRTH OF THE CHRIST-CHILD WITH
HOPE, PEACE, JOY, AND LOVE.

SUN, DEC 1, 2024 – TUE, DEC 24, 2024



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**, including home visits, hospital visits, home communion, prayer and conversation. She may be reached by text or phone at (386) 478-9012 or pastorsarah@fcindy.org.

In-Person Office Hours: Cassidy (church admin) in office Thursdays. If you need to meet, please contact her at cassidy@fcindy.org

We celebrate our worship leaders today:

Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund (she/her), Worship Leader and preacher

Bonnie Bomer (she/her), Student Pastor

Sean Baker (he/him), Music Director

Scott Semester (he/him), Worship Song Leader

Mayflower Singers

Ben James (he/him), Media Technician

Wendy Baldwin, Liturgist

***Student Minister Bonnie Bomer has a guide dog named Fiesta. Please do not touch Fiesta while she is working and wearing her harness. When her harness is off, Bonnie invites us to engage with Fiesta and pet her.

December 8, 2024

11:00 AM

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

Advent Two: Being Present with Peace

 **We Celebrate Our Presence Together: Gathering** 

Prelude

The Star Carol

Burt, Hutson

Welcome and Announcements

Becoming Present — an Advent Ritual

Choir:

What can I give Him, poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;

If I were a Wise [One], I would do my part;

Yet what can I give Him: I will give my heart.

Reader: We unwrap a present on this second Sunday of Advent with great anticipation for the gift that God will reveal.

***People:* We open our hearts as we open the gift!**

Reader: The promise of Peace is the Divine Gift we receive.

***People:* And what will we do with it?**

Reader: The gift of Christ's peace reminds us that we can have serenity even in the midst of non-peaceful situations.

Peace is not simply the absence of conflict.

Peace is an ever-present gift that we can open at any time when we stop, breathe, and trust that we are never alone.

And the gift of peace we can give is to be present for those who feel alone.

***People:* We light this Candle of Peace as a sign that we will be Present with Peace in the world.**

Choir:

What can I give Him, poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;

If I were a Wise [One], I would do my part;

Yet what can I give Him: I will give my heart.

Prayer of Presence

Let us pray:

**Holy Living Light of God,
you are our Peaceful Presence.**

**Let this peace grow in our lives each day,
so we can be a Present of Peace to others.**

Unwrap and open our hearts.

May it be so.

Amen.

Opening Hymn

“Let There Be Peace On Earth”

see back
page

The Peace

 **The Word Present Among Us: Proclaiming** 

The Gift of Children

First Readings

Isaiah 40: 1-11 and 2 Peter 3: 8-15a

Sean Baker

Reader: The prophet Isaiah lived in a time of exile perpetrated on the Hebrews by the Babylonians. By the time we get to chapter 40, one of our readings for today, the writer of this second part of Isaiah is offering themes of comfort and peace and the possibility that the paths of our lives can be cleared for new life. We also hear that we are always held in the peaceful presence of our God. Let us read these excerpts responsively:

“Console my people, give them comfort,” says your God.

***“Speak tenderly to Jerusalem’s heart,
and tell it that its time of service is ended...”***

A voice cries out,

“Clear a path through the wilderness for YHWH!

Make a straight road through the desert for our God!”

***Let every valley be filled in, every mountain and hill be laid low;
let every cliff become a plain, and the ridges become a valley!***

Go up on a high mountain, you who bring good news to Zion!

Shout with a loud voice, you who bring good news to Jerusalem!

Shout without fear, and say to the towns of Judah “Here is your God!”

***Like a shepherd you feed your flock,
gathering the lambs and holding them close,
and leading mother ewes with gentleness.***

The new churches of the first century church were encouraged by the writer of the letters called First and Second Peter. These churches were living in a confusing time as they struggled with the belief that Jesus' return was immanent... but was not yet coming to fruition. In our reading today, the writer invites them to wait with peaceful hearts, even in the midst of what feels like chaos. Hear this excerpt from the Second Letter of Peter:

“This point must not be overlooked, dear friends: in the eyes of the Most High, one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. God does not delay in keeping the promise, as some mean ‘delay.’ Rather, God shows you generous patience, desiring that no one perish but that all come to repentance... But what we await are new heavens and a new earth where, according to the promise, God’s justice will reside. So beloved, while waiting for this, make every effort to be found at peace and without stain or defilement in God’s sight. Consider our God’s patience as your opportunity for salvation.”

Gospel Reading

Mark 1:1-8

Wendy Baldwin

Reader: The second Gospel reading of Advent from the Gospel according to Mark is the very beginning of the book, setting up the idea that this story of Jesus will be a transformative experience. Drawing on the prophet Isaiah, Mark tells his readers that God is making a way in the most difficult places, clearing open paths in the desert places. John the Baptist shows up in Advent, as he typically does, a sign that the time has come when the Messiah, born of the Spirit, will be present among us.

Here begins the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God: as it was written in Isaiah the prophet: “I send my messenger before you to prepare your way, a herald’s voice in the desert, crying, ‘Make ready the

way of our God. Clear a straight path.’ ” And so John the Baptizer appeared in the desert, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to John and were baptized by him in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins. John was clothed in camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and he ate nothing but grasshoppers and wild honey. In the course of his preaching, John said, “One more powerful than I is to come after me. I am not fit to stoop and untie his sandal straps. I have baptized you in water, but the One to come will baptize you in the Holy Spirit.”

Sermon

Being Present With Peace

Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund

 **Fully Present in the Moment: Praying** 

Joys and Concerns

Prayers of the People

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.

Offering

 **Present to the World: Sending** 

Closing Carol

*“Come, O Long-Expected Jesus”
New Century Hymnal #122*

Benediction

Postlude

Our Christ Is Coming

Kendall

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

TODAY: GenderNexus Buzz – After Church there will be a pitch-in lunch and Buzz about the nonprofit organization GenderNexus. The speaker will be GenderNexus Director Emma Vosicky, J.D. GenderNexus is an Indianapolis nonprofit, founded in 2014, that fosters a safe, informed, and supported community for gender-diverse people and their loved ones.

December 15: Special Music Sunday and Baptism!

Join Us for Blue Christmas on Tuesday, December 17th at 7:00 PM as we honor the difficulty in this time of year. This will be on our Church Zoom account and will be viewable on YouTube later that week.

Join Us for the Christmas Eve candlelight service on Tuesday, December 24th at 7:00 PM.

FORGOT 2025 PLEDGE? I forgot to turn in my 2025 pledge, is it too late? The answer is “NO”. You still have time to get it turned in. Just mail it in to the church or drop it in the collection plate on Sunday. No pledge is too small or too large. No matter how large or small, your pledge helps us all.

Ways to Connect & Serve: Interested in participating with a small group at First Congregational? Check out the Connect & Serve cards in the

pews, and take one with you, if you like! Looking for an activity that isn't there - contact Wendy Baldwin.

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.

The Flower Calendar is on the bulletin board by the garden doors. Please sign up for any occasion. The flowers can come from your garden, store or florist. For more information see **Sally Coombs**.

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

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!



Thank You for Your Financial Gifts! Our current Covenant Outreach focus is related to our Mental Health Covenant that includes support for the following organizations: the UCC Mental Health Network, The Julian Center, and GenderNexus



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: 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**

Let There Be Peace on Earth

Sy Miller, Jill Jackson

C Am Dm⁷ G¹³ C C/E Gsus⁴ G

Let there be peace on earth, and let it be - gin with me; _____

9 C B⁷ Em B⁷ G⁷

let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be. _____ With

17 Am Em C⁷ F G⁷ C

God our cre - a - tor, _____ chil - dren all are we. _____

25 Am⁷ D G Am⁷ D¹³ G G⁷

Let us walk with each oth - er _____ in per - fect har - mo - ny. _____

C Am Dm⁷ G¹³ C C/G Gsus⁴ G⁷

Let peace be - gin with me, let this be the mo - ment now. _____

41 C B⁷ Em B⁷ G⁷

With ev - 'ry step I take, let this be my sol - emn vow: _____ to

49 C C+ F F^o D⁷

take each mo - ment and live each mo - ment in peace e - ter - nal - ly. _____

56 Fm⁶ C/E E⁷ F C F C/E D⁷ G⁷ Gsus⁴ C

_____ Let there be peace on earth, and let it be - gin with me.