

December 15, 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.** A

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
Bonnie Bomer (she/her), Student Pastor Preacher
Sean Baker (he/him), Music Director
Scott Semester (he/him), Worship Song Leader
Jacob Smith, String Bass
Mike Kessler, Percussion
Handbell Choir
Mayflower Singers
Ben James (he/him), Media Technician
Linda Lupton, 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 15, 2024

11:00 AM

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

Advent Three: Being Present with Joy

 **We Celebrate Our Presence Together: Gathering** 

Prelude

Christmas Time Is Here
On this Day Earth Shall Ring

Guaraldi
arr. Michael W. Joy

Welcome and Announcements

Lighting the Advent Candles

Opening Hymn #4

“Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You”

New Century Hymnal

Prayer of Presence

Let us pray:

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

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

Unwrap and open our hearts.

May it be so.

Amen.

Special Music December XMAS Eve (O Holy Night) Bob Gaudio
arr. Baker

The Peace

The Sacrament of Baptism of Soren John Glennan-March

 **The Word Present Among Us: Proclaiming** 

Special Music Someday at Christmas Miller, Wells, arr. S. Baker

First Readings Sean Baker

Isaiah 61: 1-4; 10 and Psalm 126: 1-3

Reader: The prophet Isaiah declares in this morning's excerpt from chapter 61 that there is great joy when we know, and do, what is right. This scripture was powerful in the time when the Babylonian exile was over and the Hebrew people needed the words to express their praise and thanks. And it was powerful when Jesus used these same words to refer to the heart of the purpose of his ministry. Salvation from oppression and the joy of God continue to proceed through the ages to hand-in-hand. Let us read responsively:

*God has sent me to bring good news to those who are poor;
to heal broken hearts;
to proclaim release to those held captive
and liberation to those in prison;
to announce a year of favor from YHWH, and the day of God's
vindication;*

***to comfort all who mourn, to provide for those who grieve in Zion —**
to give them a wreath of flowers instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of tears, a cloak of praise instead of
despair.*

*They will be known as trees of integrity, planted by YHWH to display
God's glory.*

***They will restore the ancient ruins,**
and rebuild sites long devastated;
they will repair the ruined cities,
neglected for generations...*

***They will be known as trees of integrity,**
planted by YHWH to display God's glory.*

***I will joyfully exult in YHWH,**
who is the joy of my soul!*

The Psalms are also written in the same time period — some poems of lament from exile and some written in the style of praise after the exile is over. Psalm 126 refers to the almost-unbelievable joy of returning to the homeland.

When YHWH brought us captives back to Zion, we thought we were dreaming! Our mouths were filled with laughter then, our tongues with songs of joy. And from the nations we heard, "Their God has done great things for them." Yes — YHWH has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.

Gospel Reading

Linda Lupton

Luke 1: 41-55

Reader: Luke is the Gospel author we draw from this week. The account of Mary visiting Elizabeth is the context for a description of joy that resides even in the midst of uncertainty and possible harm to Mary, the young pregnant woman at the margins of society. She believes with her whole heart that the child in her womb is just as the angel has declared... a gift from God, of God, the holiest of matter.

As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why am I so favored, that the mother of the Messiah should come to me? The moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who believed that what our God said to her would be accomplished!" Mary said:

*"My soul proclaims your greatness, O God,
and my spirit rejoices in you, my Savior.*

*For you have looked with favor
upon your lowly servant,
and from this day forward
all generations will call me blessed.*

*For you, the Almighty, have done great things for me,
and holy is your Name.*

*Your mercy reaches from age to age
for those who fear you.*

*You have shown strength with your arm;
you have scattered the proud in their conceit;
you have deposed the mighty from their thrones
and raised the lowly to high places.*

You have filled the hungry with good things,

*while you have sent the rich away empty.
You have come to the aid of Israel your servant,
mindful of your mercy —
the promise you made to our ancestors —
to Sarah and Abraham
and their descendants forever.”*

Sermon

Being Present with Joy

Bonnie Bomer

 **Fully Present in the Moment: Praying** 

Joys and Concerns

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.

Special Music

O Come, All You Faithful

arr. S. Baker

Offering

Special Music

An English Carol

arr. Michael W. Joy

 **Present to the World: Sending** 

Closing Carol #144

“Hark, the Herald Angels Sing”

New Century Hymnal

Benediction

Postlude

Joy to the World

arr. S Baker

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Pop-Up Coffee with Pastor Sarah! On Tuesday, December 17th from 12:30-2:00 PM, Pastor Sarah will be at The Avenue Coffee House for coffee and connection time! Drop by and have a chat! 6283 N. College Avenue, Indianapolis, IN 46220.

Christmas Story Time for Children: Dear Parents --- immediately after each service on the first 4 weeks of December, your children are invited to remain on the Playground for a Christmas story. These short lessons will take about 15 minutes during Coffee Hour. I love to tell stories! The birth of Jesus, the events before, and after -- these are all foundational events that help shape faith. Anticipation, wonder, surprise, journeys, fear, rejoicing, and celebration: these all are emotions that are part and parcel of our lives as children and adults.

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**