

December 22, 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

Judy Fletcher, 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 22, 2024

11:00 AM

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

Advent Four: Being Present with Love

 **We Celebrate Our Presence Together: Gathering** 

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

Lighting the Advent Candles

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 last 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 Love is the Divine Gift we receive.

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

Reader: The gift of love is the essence of the birth of Christ. The Holy One wanted to be so present to us that God's Spirit became flesh in order to inhabit the gifts of touching, healing, comforting, and challenging. Love is the clarion call to us as Jesus' disciples. The more love we put into the world, the better the world will be.

***People:* We light this Candle of Love as a sign that we will be Present with Love 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

Bonnie Bomer

Let us pray:

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

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

Unwrap and open our hearts.

May it be so.

Amen.

Opening Hymn

"Love Divine, All Love's Excelling" #43

New Century Hymnal

The Peace

 **The Word Present Among Us: Proclaiming** 

The Gift of Children

First Readings

Sean Baker

2 Samuel 7: 1-11 and Psalm 89: 1-4

Reader: King David didn't start out a king. He started out as a caretaker of sheep. God's anointed ones — whether that is a King like David or the "Christ," which means "anointed one" — come time and again in our faith narrative from humble beginnings, from those who tend carefully to those in their care. Hear this excerpt from the Book of Second Samuel:

When David finally settled into the palace, and YHWH gave him rest from enemies on every side, he said to the prophet Nathan, "Here I am living in this house of cedar while the Ark of God sits in a tent!" Nathan replied to David, "Go, do whatever you have in mind, for YHWH is with you." That night the word of YHWH came to Nathan, and said, "Go and tell my servant David that this is what YHWH wants: 'Are you the one to build me a Temple? I have been without a Temple from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a Tent as my dwelling place. Wherever I traveled with the people of Israel, did I ever say to the governors whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, "Why have you not built me a Temple made out of cedar?"' "Now then, tell my servant, David,

‘This is what YHWH Omnipotent says: I took you from the pastures and from following sheep to be the ruler of my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you went, and destroyed all your enemies in your path. I will give you fame like the fame of the great ones on the earth. I will provide a place for my people Israel. I will plant them where they will have a home of their own — a place where they will never be disturbed. Never again will the sinners oppress them as they did in the past ever since the time I appointed judges to lead my people Israel. I will give you security from all your enemies. . . . Furthermore, I alone will establish your house.’”

The gift of God’s presence permeates the scriptures and finds its culmination in the presence of God among us, living and in the flesh. God’s love is steadfast, from generation to generation. We are the heirs of the kin-dom, the family, of God. No matter what happens in this world, we are not alone. Let us read responsively:

*Forever I will sing the wonders of your love, YHWH,
proclaiming your faithfulness to all generations!*

***I’ll tell them that your love stands firm forever,
your fidelity is fixed in the heavens.***

*“I have made a covenant with my chosen;
sworn an oath to David, my faithful one:*

***‘I will establish your line forever,
and make your throne firm throughout all generations.’”***

Gospel Reading

Luke 1: 26-38

Judy Fletcher

Reader: And so it is that the Child of Love comes from the most humble of families, though we are sure to be informed by the gospel writer that Joseph was from the lineage of David. While David had built

a house for God in his time, Mary's womb became a house of the holy in hers. She accepts the role she is given... to be Present with Love growing inside of her.

Six months later, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a young woman named Mary; she was engaged to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. Upon arriving, the angel said to Mary, "Rejoice, highly favored one! God is with you! Blessed are you among women!" Mary was deeply troubled by these words and wondered what the angel's greeting meant. The angel went on to say to her, "Don't be afraid, Mary. You have found favor with God. You'll conceive and bear a son, and give him the name Jesus — 'Deliverance.' His dignity will be great, and he will be called the Only Begotten of God. God will give Jesus the judgment seat of David, his ancestor, to rule over the house of Jacob forever, and his reign will never end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have never been with a man?" The angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you — hence the offspring to be born will be called the Holy One of God. Know too that Elizabeth, your kinswoman, has conceived a child in her old age; she who was thought to be infertile is now in her sixth month. Nothing is impossible with God." Mary said, "I am the servant of God. Let it be done to me as you say." With that, the angel left her.

Sermon

Being Present with Love

Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund

 **Fully Present in the Moment: Praying** 

Joys and Concerns

Prayers of the People

Pastoral Prayer

Bonnie Bomer

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

Bonnie Bomer

 Present to the World: Sending 

Closing Carol

"Love Came Down at Christmas" #165

New Century Hymnal

Benediction

Postlude

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

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**