

WHISTLING IN THE WILDERNESS

ADVENT AT FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC

NOVEMBER 30 - DECEMBER 24

FCINDY.ORG



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 LGBTQAAI+ 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 “playground” at the front of the church, or use a “Quiet Bag” found in the Narthex.

Warning! Scam alert!

Do not give any financial information from requests via email or text solicitations. These are scams and not from the church!

***Disclaimer:** Our worship services are 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.

Accessibility: Please see an usher if you'd like a listening device. We also have a variety of fidgets in the playground to support neurodiversity. Don't hesitate to let an usher know if there's something else you're in need of!

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. To meet, please contact her at cassidy@fcindy.org.

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.

Masks can be found in the narthex.

We celebrate our worship leaders today:

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

Sean Baker (he/him), Music Director, Video Designer

Gracelynn Norgaard (she/her), Family Faith Ministry Leader

Scott Semester (he/him), Worship Song Leader

Jackson Teetor, Trumpet

Handbells

Mayflower Singers

Sarah Finnicum (she/her), Just Peace Intern

Ben James (he/him), Media Technician

Rev. Dr. Pat Larracey, Liturgist

Rev. Dr. Pat Larracey, Advent Candle

December 14, 2025

ADVENT

11:00 AM

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

PRELUDE

Away in a Manger

arr. Baker

INTROIT

Whistling Away the Dark

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: There is room for all in the shadow of God's wing;

All: There is room for all, sheltered in God's love.

One: And I rejoice and sing,

All: "My refuge and my rock, in whom I trust."

One: There is room for all,

All: there is room for all.

LIGHTING OF ADVENT CANDLE

Rev. Dr. Pat Larracey

THRESHOLD MOMENT

MESSAGE FOR ALL AGES

Gracelynn Norgaard

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Forgiving God, in this season of Advent,

we welcome the coming of your light

in a world filled with the shadows of darkness.

We confess to you the ways in which we have added to the shadows rather than answered the call to live as children of the light. We ask your forgiveness:

for times when we worship violence and belittle peace,

for times when we fight amongst ourselves,

for times when we forget that we are all children of God,

for times when we do not stand up for the helpless among us.

By your tender mercy, may the light from above shine on our path in the wilderness and give light to those of us lost in shadows of darkness and death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

By the mercy and grace of our Good God, we may live in peace with one another for we have been forgiven. Christ welcomes us home into the heart of God's love and light.

Alleluia! Amen!

RESPONSE

There's a Voice in the Wilderness

BLUE CHRISTMAS PEACE MOMENT

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 35:1-10

Rev. Dr. Pat Larracey

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE

MESSAGE

Whistling Through the Wilderness of Joy

Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund

REFLECTION

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Scott Semester

*HYMN #129 Good Christian Friends, Rejoice New Century Hymnal

JOYS & CONCERNS

MEDITATION

Latin Snowfall

Mancini arr. Baker

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

OFFERING AND UCC CHRISTMAS FUND

INTERLUDE

The Rocking Carol

arr. Anna Laura Page

DOXOLOGY

**All praise to God we now do sing.
Our gifts this Advent now we bring.
This waiting time of joy we share,
As for the Christ our hearts prepare.**

*HYMN #125 Angels We Have Heard on High New Century Hymnal

BENEDICTION

BLESSING SONG There's a Voice in the Wilderness

POSTLUDE Joy to the World! arr. Baker

Opportunities for Giving, Sharing, Fellowship & Fun!

YOUTH GROUP SUNDAY! This Sunday after service, youth group meets from 12:30-2:30 PM!

Christmas Goodies: We will have refreshments & fellowship following the Christmas Eve service. If you have Christmas cookies and goodies that you can share, please leave them in a marked container in the fridge in the kitchenette by 12/23. Questions - contact Wendy Baldwin.

Fun at First on New Year's Eve DAY – Dec 31, 1:30-3:30: Want to celebrate New Year's without being out at night? Join us for fun and games in the Parlor on Dec 31 from 1:30-3:30. We'll have munchies and drinks (non-alcoholic) while we share fellowship and dreams for 2026

THE CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING: First Congregational Church has prided itself in supporting the UCC's special mission offerings. We are a 5 for 5 church which means we consistently contribute to the five special offerings sponsored by the national church. In this Advent season we have the opportunity to support the Christmas Fund. The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees. These gifts are administered by the UCC Pension Board.

I haven't paid much attention to this offering in years past, but this year is different. Earlier in the year I was appointed as one of the Annuitant Visitors for the Indiana Kentucky Conference. I was given a list of UCC retirees in the middle section of Indiana. Now I have visited 27 of them and marvel at their stories of long and faithful service to the church, many serving small or rural churches receiving minimal salaries over the years. The UCC is the only denomination that has a comprehensive program to visit retirees, thank them for their ministry, check on how their benefits are working, and access special needs that might qualify for supplemental support.

Please consider donating today to ensure more healers receive the loving support of the Church in their moment of deepest need. **The Christmas Fund was here for them.** And regardless of who you are or what brought you to the United Church of Christ, **The Christmas Fund is here for you.** Your gift is more than just a testament to your belief in the values of the United Church of Christ, it is a critical lifeline for those who depend on our grant programs for care and support. Make your donations to First Congregational Church with a memo designating Christmas Fund. Thank you again for your generosity.

-Rev. Worth Hartman, FCC Outreach and Service Board Member and UCC Pension Board Annuitant Visitor



Christmas Wish Tree – This year the Outreach & Service Board is going to try something new. After the gift cards and knitwear are collected on Sunday, December 7, 2025, one of the trees will be left up and become a Wish Tree. **Beginning on December 14, 2025**, Cards will be available for everyone to write down their wishes for 2026. This can be a personal wish, a wish for our Church, or a wish for world in the coming year. The wishes will be collected through Sunday, January 4, 2025. Some of the collected wishes may be shared during a Joy and Concern moment or an Epistle or Colony article.

ANNUAL MEETING DATE CHANGE: The Annual Meeting for FCC has been changed by the Church Council to Sunday, February 1, 2026 because of the calendar and the timing of materials. Please plan on attending and mark your calendars with the appropriate date.

New Wifi: We recently upgraded our Wifi throughout the church building and there are now new networks. To access Wifi, please use FCGuest and the password is Godisgr8. Questions/comments? Contact Wendy Baldwin.

Indy Action Coalition: LEADER'S ASSEMBLY • THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 6:30 PM ST. LUKE'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, DOOR # 6, 100 WEST 86TH STREET INDIANAPOLIS IN 46260. Join Indy Action Coalition for our final assembly of the year, where we will both update and sketch a plan out for a public action in 2026 addressing issues including:

- Community Safety Plan coordinating with the city a plan to resist federal intrusion in Indianapolis protecting immigrant neighbors from ICE deportation, providing food, housing, and support
- Housing: insure funding for Phase III Streets to Homes providing services to move folks from homelessness to permanent housing and engage the city in leveraging private funds for this effort

Seeking Gifts for the Acts of Kindness Fund: This is a special fund for our church members facing temporary financial setbacks. Can you make a special gift to it that will help individuals in our church family? Questions - ask Wendy Baldwin.



Thank You for Your Financial Gifts!

The Covenant giving organizations for September to December 2025 are the UCC Mental Health Network, GenderNexus, and Indy Action Coalition. Gifts of single dollars, or those designated to Covenant Outreach, are divided equally 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 in 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: 1-800-950-NAMI (6264) **The Trevor**

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 35:1-10

Let the desert and the wilderness exult!

Let the Arabah rejoice and bloom like the crocus!

Let it blossom profusely, let it rejoice and sing for joy! The glory of Lebanon is bestowed on it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon.

Let it blossom profusely, let it rejoice and sing for joy! The glory of Lebanon is bestowed on it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon.

Strengthen all weary hands, steady all trembling knees.

Say to all those of faint heart: "Take courage! Do not be afraid! Look, YHWH is coming, vindication is coming, the recompense of God— God is coming to save you!" Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, the ears of the deaf will be unsealed. Then those who cannot walk will leap like deer and the tongues of those who cannot speak will sing for joy.

Waters will break forth in the wilderness, and there will be streams in the desert. The scorched earth will become a lake; the parched land, springs of water. The lairs where jackals used to dwell will become thickets of reed and papyrus. And through it will run a highway, a road called the Sacred Path. The unclean may not travel by it, but it will be for God's people alone; and no traveler—not even fools—will go astray.

No lions will be there, nor will any fierce beast roam about it, but the redeemed will walk there—for those whom YHWH has ransomed will return.

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

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