

# 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](mailto:pastorsarah@fcindy.org)

**In-Person Office Hours:** Cassidy (church admin) in office Thursdays. To meet, please contact her at [cassidy@fcindy.org](mailto: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

Jacob Smith, Bass

Mike Kessler, Percussion

Julie Houston, Flute

Mayflower Singers

Ben James (he/him), Media Technician

Rev. Worth Hartman, Liturgist

Rev. Worth Hartman, Advent Candle

**December 21, 2025**

**ADVENT**

**11:00 AM**

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

PRELUDE

What Child Is This

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 CANDLES

Rev. Worth Hartman

## THRESHOLD MOMENT

\*HYMN #135

O Come, All You Faithful

*New Century Hymnal*

## 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

ANTHEM

Whistling Away the Dark Mancini, Mercer, arr. Baker

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 1:18-25 Rev. Worth Hartman

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE

MESSAGE Whistling Through the Wilderness in Promise of God's Presence  
Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund

\*HYMN #116 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (vs. 1,3,7) *New Century Hymnal*

SPECIAL MUSIC Carol for Another Christmas Stillman, Mancini,  
arr. Baker

JOYS & CONCERNS

MEDITATION Winter's Retreat P. Oprisko, 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

INTERLUDE

Christmas Is A-Comin'

F. Luther

## DOXOLOGY

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

\*HYMN #144      Hark! The Herlad Angels Sing      *New Century Hymnal*

## BENEDICTION

BLESSING SONG      There's a Voice in the Wilderness

POSTLUDE      Our Christ Is Coming      T. Kendall, arr. Baker

## Opportunities for Giving, Sharing, Fellowship & Fun!

**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

**Dream God's Dream!** Our church depends on the financial gifts from members and friends in order for us to Dream God's Dream. Will you make a pledge of financial support for 2026? If so, please turn in your pledge intention by 12/31, and we will bless these on Epiphany Sunday, 1/4. Additional pledge cards are available in the Narthex, or email Financial Secretary Cristy James. Thank you to all who enable us to Dream God's Dream!

**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.

**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.



**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.

**Worship Refreshment Hosting:** On Sundays, our custom is to provide snacks and beverages before and after worship in the Parlor. There is a sign-up sheet in the Narthex, or contact Wendy. Also let her know if you would like more info and/or some 'training' on this process.

**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.

**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** – Join our Adult Ed group for thoughtful study and discussion or go to choir practice to rehearse for that morning's singing, all skill levels welcome!



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](http://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 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](http://www.theTrevorProject.org)

## TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Matthew 1:18-25

This is how the birth of Jesus came about. When Jesus' mother, Mary, was engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Joseph, her husband, an upright person unwilling to disgrace her, decided to divorce her quietly. This was Joseph's intention when suddenly the angel of God appeared in a dream and said, "Joseph, heir to the House of David, don't be afraid to wed Mary; it is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived this child. She is to have a son, and you are to name him Jesus—'Salvation'—because he will save the people from their sins." All this happened to fulfill what God has said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and give birth, and the child will be named Immanuel" —a name that means "God is with us." When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of God had directed, and they went ahead with the marriage. He did not have intercourse with her until she had given birth; she had a son, and they named him Jesus.

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



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