

Welcome!

First Congregational Church
of Webster Groves United Church of Christ



Seek Christ in each. Serve God in all.

NOVEMBER 26, 2023

MAJESTY OF CHRIST — BLUE CHRISTMAS



We respond to God's call by welcoming everyone regardless of ability, age, ethnicity, race, gender identity, sexual orientation or socio-economic background.

To proclaim in word and deed the love of Christ, we affirm that all may share in the full life, ministry, fellowship, responsibilities and blessing of our congregation.

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

Order of Worship

An asterisk () indicates that worshipers are invited to stand in body or in spirit.*

PRELUDE

WELCOME

Rebecca Novak, *Liturgist*

At this time, we invite you to complete an entry in the Friendship Booklet and to silence the ringer on any cellular device you may have with you.

LIGHTING THE CANDLES

TOLLING THE BELL

CALL TO WORSHIP (Responsive – Leader; **People**)

Blessed be our God who gathers us as the church of Jesus Christ.

And blessed be God's majesty now and forever.

Take comfort, people of God, in the one who came that all may have life and have it more abundantly, who places the needful at the heart of God's love.

Praise and honor to Jesus Christ, God with us, who calls us friends and lives in our midst by the power of the Holy Spirit.

*GATHERING HYMN

Fairest Lord Jesus

Anonymous

Fairest Lord Jesus, Ruler of creation,
Thou of God and Anointed One,
Truly I'd love thee, truly I'd serve thee,
Light of my soul, my joy, my crown.

Fair are the meadows, fair are the woodlands
Robed in the flowers of blooming spring,
Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer
Who makes the sorrowing spirit sing.

Beautiful Savior, Lord of the nations,
Thou of God and Anointed One,
Glory and honor, praise and adoration
Now and for evermore be thine!

*RAISING THE COVENANT (Unison)

Covenant of 1977

We who are called of God into this Christian community covenant together: to seek to know the will of God, to experience the joy and struggle of discipleship, to proclaim in word and deed the love of Christ, and to work for peace and justice among all people. We trust God's promise of grace and forgiveness and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our trials and rejoicing.

RITUAL OF APPROACH

Invitation (Responsive)

from 1 John 1

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Prayer of Confession (Unison)

Loving God, nurturer of our souls, hear the longing of our hearts for fullness of life. Too often we have exchanged the gift of your grace for things that do not endure. We speak of Jesus Christ with reverence but have so often spent our days in service to selfish ends. We sing of our Savior's reign but have chosen to believe more often in our own self-importance. Deliver us from everything that confounds our relationships with you and one another. Be present with us now, and guide us into your grace and truth. We ask this in the name of the one who taught us to pray for your reign to come on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Silence for Personal Confession (Responsive)

Words of Assurance

based on Ezekiel 37

Thus says our God: I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the injured, and I will strengthen the weak. I will feed them with justice.

God makes with us a covenant of peace and well-being so that we may be a blessing. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**Singing God's Glory*

Glory to God in the Highest

Tune: GLORIA (HAAS)

The congregation repeats each line of the following after the Minister:

Glory to God! Glory to God! Glory in the highest!

To God be glory forever!

Next, the Minister leads the congregation in harmonizing the following:

Alleluia! Amen! Alleluia! Amen!

NOT FOR CHILDREN ONLY

Johari Hunt, *Coordinator of Faith Formation*

Illustration

Blue Christmas

Bill Hayes & Jay W. Johnson

sung by Martin Mills

THE WORD SHARED

From the Gospels

Matthew 25:31-46

Pew Bible, p. 904

Response

Liturgist: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the people.

People: Thanks be to God.

ANTHEM

Are You Lonesome Tonight?

Lou Handman & Roy Turk

sung by Martin Mills

MESSAGE OF THE DAY

Broken Isn't Permanent

Rev. David Denoon, *Pastor*

RITUAL FOR HEALING

Reading

A Blessing for Traveling in the Dark

Jan Richardson

Introduction (Responsive)

Here we are in your presence, God,

In our need, and bringing with us the needs of the world.

We have come to you, for you came to us in Jesus,

And you know by experience what human life is like.

We have come with our faith and with our doubts;

We come with our hopes and with our fears.

We have come as we are, because you invite us to come;

And you have promised never to turn us away.

Prayer of Our Savior

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Ritual Actions

For this portion of the service, worshipers are invited either to

- remain in their seats in quiet meditation, or else*
- come forward and receive an anointing with a healing balm and a blessing from the pastor.*

These options are entirely voluntary.

Prayer for Healing

God of compassion and love, we offer you all our suffering and pain. Give us strength to bear our weakness, healing even when there is no cure, peace in the midst of turmoil, and love to fill the spaces in our lives. Glory to you, O God, from whom all love flows. Glory to Jesus who showed his love through suffering. Glory to the Holy Spirit who brings light to the darkest places. Amen.

WE GIVE OF OURSELVES

Opportunities for Giving and Gathering

**Song of Praise*

Doxology

Ken / Bourgeois

Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

Praise God, all creatures here below!

Praise God above, you heavenly host –

Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost! Amen.

**Prayer of Dedication*

Mighty God and Source of all healing and wholeness, bless these gifts, we pray, and put them to your work. Let them be practical extensions of the relief and compassion we ourselves seek to provide with hands and hearts in person, in Christ's name. Amen.

***PARTING HYMN**

For the Fruit of All Creation
No. 425 – *New Century Hymnal*

Fred Pratt Green

***BENEDICTION**

***PARTING WORDS**

Liturgist: Our worship has ended.
People: **Let our service begin.**

POSTLUDE

During the Postlude, we encourage you to greet those around you, or to remain at your seat to enjoy the music until it has ended. In the spirit of diversity, please be attentive to the possibility that one who is seated may be meditating.

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Wi-Fi Info

Recommended: fccwg1, fccwg2 or fccwg3 | Password for all: firstchurch.

Connecting Remotely to Worship

If you need to join us remotely, Sunday worship each week is streamed live on YouTube, starting at 10am (bit.ly/FCCWG-YT).

Finding Your Way at First Church

The Nursery: The Nursery is located through the double doors at the end of the Narthex (foyer), turn left. **Nursery/Toddler Room** is on your right.

Restrooms: Family restrooms are located to the right of the Narthex (foyer) as you go to the library (look for the blue library banner) and to the left of the Narthex just before the double doors.

How to Donate to First Congregational Church

You may leave a donation in the offering plate in the Narthex, OR Send a check made payable to FCCWG at:

First Congregational Church
10 W. Lockwood Ave.
Webster Groves, MO 63119

Visit <http://firstchurchwg.org/donate> to make an electronic contribution or scan the accompanying QR code.



**Outdoor Christmas Tree Decorating Party Returns to the Jubilee Garden!
Sunday, December 3, 11:20 am**

Gather in the Jubilee Garden after worship on Sunday, December 3, to decorate our outdoor Christmas Tree with ornaments suitable for our animal friends (It has been customary for everyone to bring a bird feeder ornament to put on the tree.). There will be a bonfire, caroling, treats and beverages! *Sponsored by Parish Life Ministry*

Family Concert, December 3 at 2:30PM

The Xylem Wind Collective will perform on Sunday, December 3 at 2:30pm, in the sanctuary a free, family friendly, hour-long concert with narrator, featuring the stories of *Hansel and Gretel* and *The Unhappy Aardvark*, as well as other fun pieces.

Information Needed to Keep Children Safe and Healthy

For parents who have children attending Kid's Church please follow this link, <https://tinyurl.com/fccwg-kids> to fill out a dietary and allergy form for each child attending. Thank you!

OASIS Classes for Older Adults at Eden Seminary

There is one remaining class in the fall session: The Christmas story according to the book of Matthew, December 1 & 8. Call the OASIS office at 314-862-4859 Ext 24 to register or register online at <https://st-louis.oasisnet.org/> If you would like to be on the mailing list to receive the OASIS catalog for the upcoming session beginning in January, follow this link - <https://tinyurl.com/oasis-eden>

Pecans Are In!

The much-anticipated arrival of the fresh 16 oz bags of Mammoth Pecans has arrived from Georgia! The price of the bags will be the same as last year, at \$14 per bag. The profits from the pecan sales will be used to increase the Minister's Discretionary Fund. This will allow Pastor Dave to help our members and our neighbors in need.

Help Needed with Blankets!

If you would like to fold and package blankets for giving to unhoused folks in this cold weather, please join me at FCCWG November 28 and/or 29th. I will show up with my coffee at 10:00am and work as long as I can. We have many blankets to bundle up and more coming so there is much to be done. Your help will be much appreciated!

Grace and Peace,
Jan Barnes

Maybe This Is the Year for You to Experience Yankee Swap?

Mike Lenard has again invited us to his home. The party is from 1:00 to 5:00 PM, on December 3rd, with a potluck meal, and then we will do our crazy gift exchange. And we will finish before dark!

Here Is the Drill:

- Bring a handmade/homemade gift (unwrapped)-one per person
- Bring a side dish, salad, or dessert for the table
- Sign up in the office for what you will bring for the table
- Pick up a map in the office.
- Call Garie Perry if you have questions. 314-698-2614
- Bring a donation for Webster Rock Hill Ministries

Mike's Address is 1467 Heritage Valley Drive, High Ridge

Poinsettias for the Sanctuary

We have ordered several poinsettias this year that you may sponsor. You will have the opportunity to pick them up after the afternoon service on Christmas eve or by contacting the office to arrange a time, or you may donate the poinsettia to one of our home bound members. Please take an order form from the table in the narthex. They will be \$20 each. You may also order online at <https://tinyurl.com/fccwg-poinsettias>

Jazz Noel: *Follow That Star!*
December 17th at 3:00 PM in the Sanctuary

“Follow That Star” is this year’s Jazz Noel theme. The music of the Oikos Ensemble and creative storytelling of the Logos Readers follows the journey of the Magi. What does their quest mean for us today?

The Lady Elect Christmas Gathering
Tuesday, December 12th

The gathering will be at Pat Doyle-Graces home in Webster Groves. It will be an evening meeting 4 to 7 PM. As part of the festivities, we will have a Cookie Exchange. Please bag your cookies about 3-4 per bag. Also, bring an extra container to take your cookies home with you. For more information or to RSVP, email Faye Dyer at southernillinoisdyer@gmail.com. All women of the church are welcome to attend.

What’s Happening at First Church

Sunday, November 26

Blue Christmas

Majesty of Christ Sunday

9:45AM Nursery Care

10:00AM Worship

10:15AM Kids’ Church

11:05AM Coffee Fellowship - Memorial Hall

Monday, November 27

7:00PM Scout Troop 301B & 301G - Dickens Room

Wednesday, November 29

9:30AM Yoga with Jeanene - Inglis Room

6:00PM Bridge Club - Inglis Room

Thursday, November 30

6:00PM Canterbury Bells - Sanctuary

7:30PM Chancel Choir - Music Room

Sunday, December 3

First Sunday of Advent

Sacrament of Christ’s Table

9:00AM Brown Baggers

9:45AM Nursery Care

10:00AM Worship (All Ages)

**11:05AM Coffee Fellowship, including Outdoor Christmas Tree
Decorating Party!**

**2:30PM Xylem Wind Collective: *Hansel and Gretel* and more -
Sanctuary**



Covenant News

November 2023

Moderator's Corner

Prior to writing the letter you are now reading, I wrote a poem declaring everything I am thankful for with regards to our church family.

And then I deleted it. It failed to deliver what I was going for. It wasn't good. The inspiring words of Paul Davis, shared during a recent Sunday service, had given me the courage to give poetry a try. Standing in the immense shadow cast by his literary standard also gave me confidence to ensure my draft would never see the light of day.

Still, I want to share my message of thankfulness and what I learned from the exercise of trying to push my own boundaries.

Writing down all you are thankful for is a spiritual exercise. Give it a try. Five minutes spent contemplating your blessings lifts your spirits and fills you with gratitude. Those minutes are time well spent. I need to do this more often.

After a rush of good feelings had passed, I need to tell you that I felt selfish. Rewarded feelings of love, belonging and community, paid only to me. The gratitude list I drafted is also a to-do list. People should be thanked in person, payment in full.

I am grateful for our church family. I hope you have time to celebrate this holiday season with loved ones, and you are able to share what you are thankful for. God has given us a great gift by bringing us into this wonderful community.

Doug Barton,
Moderator

Treasurer's Report

Below are the year to date church operating results through October 2023:

- Cash on hand is \$13k lower than prior year at the end of this month. The church has less than 2 months of cash on hand. We will continue to monitor operating funds and transfer funds as needed from the Endowment.
- Income is \$22,462 lower than prior year due as follows:
 - (\$40k): Endowment transfer
 - (\$5.9k): Pledge income
 - \$24k: Use of Space fees are higher
- Expenses are \$19,041 higher than last year primarily due to Facility & Finance expense up with general building repairs \$12k higher this year, including \$8k on the HVAC system and insurance expense \$6k higher this year

Statement of Financial Activities						
	YTD 2023	YTD 2022	Change to Prior Year	Forecast 2023	Full year 2022	Full Year Budget
Income			Higher/ (Lower)			
Pledges and Gifts	\$ 255,754	\$ 261,645	\$ (5,890)	\$ 325,754	\$ 371,249	\$ 315,000
Transfer from Endowment	105,000	145,000	(40,000)	135,000	175,000	290,000
Benevolence	23,087	22,572	515	23,087	22,572	15,000
Use of Space and Miscellaneous	82,910	58,420	24,490	94,268	69,778	62,115
Interest Income	18,113	19,689	(1,577)	26,432	28,009	21,000
Total Revenue	484,864	507,327	(22,462)	604,541	666,608	703,115
Expenses			(Higher)/ Lower			
Human Resources Expense	\$ 382,252	\$ 380,797	(1,455)	\$ 462,252	\$ 459,424	\$ 482,928
Facilities and Finance Expense	152,439	132,399	(20,040)	163,375	156,490	163,375
Benevolence Expense	30,403	33,250	2,847	38,983	36,600	32,000
Christian Education Ministry Expense	1,212	2,827	1,615	1,500	2,885	3,600
Parish Life Ministry Expense	7,740	8,414	674	9,000	9,744	11,400
Executive Ministry Expense	6,398	3,717	(2,682)	7,500	4,854	9,700
Total Expenses	580,444	561,403	(19,041)	682,610	669,997	703,003
Net Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets	\$ (95,580)	\$ (54,077)	\$ (41,503)	\$ (78,069)	\$ (3,389)	\$ 112

Statement of Financial Position			
	2023	2022	Variance
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 104,764	\$ 117,902	\$ (13,137)
Pledges receivable	73,722	60,756	12,966
Property and equipment	25,622	27,079	(1,457)
Minister housing long term receivable	60,000	60,000	-
Total Assets	\$ 264,108	\$ 265,737	\$ (1,629)
Unrestricted Designated Funds	48,224	38,114	10,110
Restricted funds for:			
Funds in Endowment Trust	56,839	51,334	5,505
Churchyard	38,629	38,370	259
Kishlar/Dickens Room Maintenance	49,046	49,046	-
Temporarily restricted funds for pledges	73,722	60,756	12,966
Memorial Funds	63,420	57,222	6,198
Long term liabilities	60,000	60,000	-
Unrestricted Net Assets	(133,147)	(89,105)	(44,042)
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 264,108	\$ 265,737	\$ (1,629)

Jennifer Jones
Treasurer



10 West Lockwood Avenue
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314-962-0475
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Contact Information

Moderator – Doug Barton
iyell4@aol.com

Pastor – Rev. David A. Denoon
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Facilities Manager – Chip Isringhaus
ctil234@FirstChurchWG.org

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Custodian & AV Tech – Mark Metcalf

Weekend & Events Custodians –
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Assistant Custodian – Gus McLean

Director of Ministry of Imagination, Creativity
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Chaplain, Stillpoint Campus Ministry
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