

Welcome!

First Congregational Church
of Webster Groves United Church of Christ



Seek Christ in each. Serve God in all.

DECEMBER 3, 2023
SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT
HANGING OF THE GREENS



*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.*

PREPARING THE WAY

PRELUDE

Wachet Auf
Leon Burke, organ; Cliff Aerie, saxophone

J. S. Bach

WELCOME

Linda Kopetti, *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.*

TOLLING OF THE BELL

LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

PROCESSION

Once in Royal David's City
No. 145, vv. 1,2,5 – *New Century Hymnal*

C. F. Alexander

AT THE ADVENT WREATH
Traditions Remembered

SECOND CANDLE: PEACE

The Hoepfer Family

Ritual (Responsive – Leaders; **People**)

The peace of God surpasses all understanding.

**Here we are at the Advent wreath—humble, vulnerable, and
guided by an ancient longing.**

A great poet once said that peace is always louder than the explosion of bombs
and the sounds of violence.

**We call upon the triumphant symphony of peace—the choirs of
angels and saints, the laughter of children with grownups, the
sobs of loved ones reuniting in safety, and the breaking of
bread.**

Let us call into being a peace as loud as it is delightful, hard-earned, and
satisfying.

**Peace, as fullness of life, soothes like a hum and settles us back
into our bodies.**

Let us be a people of peace.

May the light of peace shine in and from our lives. Amen.

***RAISING THE COVENANT**

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.**

HANGING OF THE GREENS

THE HANDBELLS

Reading

Christmas Bells

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

At the speaker's instruction, the wreath-bearers exit by the outer aisles.

GOING FORTH

***BENEDICTION**

includes *The Christmas Spirit*

C. T. Moody

***WORDS OF PARTING**

Liturgist: Our worship has ended.

People: **Let our service begin.**

POSTLUDE

In Dulci Jubilo

J. S. Bach

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.



First Church Merch!

Christmas Shopping Starts Here at First Church!

- 1) **We have more than a case of wonderful pecans left for \$14 per bag.** Not only do they make great presents, pecan pie and other yummy recipes, but the profits from the pecan sales will also be used to increase the Minister's Discretionary Fund. This will allow Pastor Dave to help our members and our neighbors in need.
- 2) **Most of the Poinsettias are still available for sponsorship,** that can go home with you after worship on Christmas Eve. If you don't want to take them home, 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>
- 3) **Show your pride in First Church by wearing one of our lovely Tee-Shirts.** There are a limited amounts left in a variety of sizes. These cotton shirts are only \$15.00.

Please contact Debbie in the office if you are interested in any of the above items!

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.

Jazz Noel Sunday, December 17 at 3:00 PM

“Follow That Star” is this year’s Jazz Noel theme. With the music of the Oikos Ensemble and creative storytelling of the Logos Readers, follow the journey of the Magi. What does their quest mean for us today? Download a flier from bit.ly/JazzNoel2023

Fun Collections Needed

Do you have a collection you would like to share in the Display Case in 2024? We have had very positive responses to the collections recently displayed and would like to continue with more. Past displays have included a large and very fun *I Love Lucy* collection, train sets, and other fun collections. If you would like to share one of yours, please contact Joan Musbach.

Confirmation / Baptism Class Forming

We have learned that there are some youth in the church who would like to do an exploration about faith. Starting in January, Pastor Dave will be offering a Confirmation / Baptism Class for young people in high school and up (including adults who are simply young-at-heart). The class will run through the first Sunday of June, when participants will be invited to affirm their faith. ***If you would like to enroll in this (mostly Zoom) class, please contact the Pastor and let him know!***

Stay Safe from Gift Card Scammers!

It may seem unnecessary for us to say this, but it’s gotta be said: **The Pastor will never ask you for gift cards in any amount, by text or email!** Two church members, this week, reported that they had received text messages from him requesting four \$100 gift cards each. Fortunately, both of them contacted Pastor Dave before making purchases.

What’s Happening at First Church

Sunday, December 10

Second Sunday of Advent: Peace

Hanging of the Greens

9:45AM Nursery Care

10:00AM Worship (Hanging of the Greens)

11:05AM Coffee Fellowship (“Snack Luck”)

11:15AM Kids Church Caroling Rehearsal
(Sanctuary)

Monday, December 11

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

7:00PM Three Ministries (Hybrid)

Tuesday, December 12

10:30AM Staff Meeting - Church Office

4:00PM Lady Elect (Off Campus)

Wednesday, December 13

9:30AM Yoga with Jeanene – Inglis Room

6:00PM Bridge Club – Inglis Room

Thursday, December 14

6:00PM Canterbury Bells – Sanctuary

7:30PM Chancel Choir – Music Room

Sunday, December 17

Third Sunday of Advent: Joy

9:45AM Nursery Care

10:00AM Jazz Worship (All Ages)

11:05AM Coffee Fellowship

3:00PM Jazz Noel: Follow That Star! – Sanctuary

December Birthdays

Tom Waltz	December 6
Earl Rinne	December 12
Nannelle Griffith	December 13
Dan Claggett	December 14
Rebecca Novak	December 16
Janet Fales	December 24
Terri Thompson	December 26

December Meal-a-Month Shopping List

Canned Ham • Brown Rice • Instant Mashed Potatoes
Canned Green Vegetable (low or no salt) • Canned Fruit in own juices
Powdered Milk, shelf stable milk, soy milk
Baby Fruits • Baby Vegetables • Baby Cereal



THE CHRISTMAS FUND: "GRACE UPON GRACE"

"From Christ's fullness we have all received, grace upon grace."

John 1:16

Grace is truly at the center of everything for us humans. Grace shapes our faith, our family, our friendships, and our identity. Grace is not just being given the benefit of the doubt, or God bestowing favor on the less than worthy. Grace is also the root of gratitude and thankfulness. It is at the heart of our thanksgiving/eucharistic meal. "Grace upon grace" is a reminder of the great gifts of God to us, and an expression of our grateful response to that fullness.

Your gifts to the Christmas Fund allow the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance to provide grace, hope, and joy through financial relief to UCC pastors, lay church leaders, and their families. Thanks to you, no request goes unfulfilled. Your graceful response to the Christmas Fund appeal ensures the flow of loving support will not be interrupted.

In 2022, gifts to the Christmas Fund enabled:

- Monthly pension supplementation for 218 retired clergy and lay employees (\$1,042,726)
- Health benefits supplementation for 86 retired clergy and lay employees (\$181,389)
- Emergency grants for 55 individuals and families (\$138,022)
- Christmas "Thank You" gift checks to 479 retired clergy and lay employees (\$278,500)

THE CHRISTMAS FUND

For the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund
Give online at www.christmasfund.org.



Covenant News

December 2023

FROM THE PASTOR

“Carols and My Inner Scrooge”

What has come into being in the Word was life, and the life was the light of all people.
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.
John 1:3b-5

Our season of preparation is upon us – Advent. It is a time which, since my childhood, I have used to keep myself patient for Christmas. Now that I’ve gone spinning around the sun for more than 60 years, keeping myself patient in Advent seems to have more to do with subduing my inner Scrooge.

I admit, that part of me is impatient for Christmas *to be past*. The bills, the unrealistic expectations, the hyperbole (yes, even in worship), and the sighs (sigh) have made patience a matter of toughening my heart.

Furthermore, we will say, “Unto us a child is born, unto us a baby given...” and yet, in a few short months, we will be remembering how he was killed – killed for our sakes, yes, but the gruesomeness is unsettling. That portion we so rarely sing, of the carol *What Child Is This*, nudges my curmudgeonly heart:

Nails, spear shall pierce him through,
The cross be born, for me, for you.
Hail, hail the Word made flesh –
The babe, the son of Mary!

We’re not thinking about this when we sing with one another, “Ding-dong! Merrily on high the Christmas bells are ringing!” I, at least, am using my *Hear comes Christmas!* Advent to slip past my inner Scrooge and its *Bah! Humbug!* Christmas.

How shall my heart be resolved? That’s going to require some spiritual realism!

Two of my colleagues in the two days that I have been composing this article have chosen (unprompted, I should add) to remind me of how, when we imagine the birth of the Christ, we imagine it in a veil of darkness.

This is not a bad thing, they’ve told me. One referred to the darkness of night in which we may be surprised even to find stars shining. The other spoke about the darkness of the womb and the shock of the light to our eyes when we are born. Furthermore, “The world feels dim,” she said, quoting Cole Arthur Riley¹, “but we dream in the dark.”

I’m working now on getting my two kinds of patience – one favoring the Advent of Christmas and the other the Advent of post-Christmas – to respect each other. After all, they intersect, don’t they! So, I’m singing contradicting Christmas carols and letting my inner child give my inner Scrooge a hug.

Peace to you,
and blessings for Christmas!

¹ **Cole Arthur Riley** is a writer and poet. She is the author of the NYT bestseller, *This Here Flesh: Spirituality, Liberation, and the Stories that Make Us*.



Covenant News

December 2023

WORSHIP NOTES FOR DECEMBER 2023

This schedule is subject to change, as need may arise. All worship services will be offered in person and live streamed (bit.ly/FCCWG-YT), at 10:00am on Sundays.

DECEMBER 3 – FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT; SACRAMENT OF CHRIST’S TABLE. Liturgist: Jenny Jones; At the Advent Wreath (Hope): Shoulberg/Mockabee Family; Music: Noel Burke, viola, and Leon Burke, accompanist. Scripture: Mark 13: 24-37. As Jesus warns the disciples to “Keep awake” and ready for the manifestation of God among us, we are reminded of how critical it is to pay attention to the aspects of our lives that can point us toward hope. Message: **“Wakefulness”**

DECEMBER 10 – SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT; HANGING OF THE GREENS (ALL AGES). Liturgist: Linda Kopetti; At the Advent Wreath (Peace): The Hoeper Family. This annual tradition at First Church includes our decoration of the sanctuary for Christmas. Everyone who comes gets to participate as we hear bells and carols again, and add wreaths, candles, a crèche, poinsettias, and the Christmas tree in a festive ritual of music and readings.

DECEMBER 17 – THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT; JAZZ WORSHIP (ALL AGES). Liturgist: Ernie Carter. At the Advent Wreath (Joy): The Polaske Family. Music by the Oikos Jazz Ensemble with tenor Mark Cereghino and Kids Church participants. Special presentation by the Logos Readers. Scriptures: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24.

***This afternoon at 3PM, please plan to attend
“JAZZ NOEL – FOLLOW THAT STAR!”***

DECEMBER 24, 10:00AM – FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT; A SERVICE OF NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS; CHRISTMAS FUND SPECIAL OFFERING. Liturgist: Andrea Welnick. At the Advent Wreath (Love): Hensley/Gomez Family. This very special service incorporates voices and instruments performing readings and music that may be familiar or new, to celebrate of the birth of the Messiah and the mystery of the Incarnation. ***This service will be followed with our Christmas Wassail Bowl reception.***

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24, 4:30 PM — FAMILY CHRISTMAS EVE. This brief worship service features many of the readings you’ll have heard in the morning but with a Live Nativity tableau! ***“Gifts for the Manger”*** will be collected – infant and family needs to be presented to local charities, along with cash offerings. Singing of “Silent Night” ends the service, with battery-powered candles for the children to hold.

***There will be no services conducted at First Church
after the Family Christmas Eve,
or on Christmas Day, Sunday, December 25.***

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31 – NEW YEAR’S EVE; SIXTH DAY OF KWANZA’A – KU’UMBA (CREATIVITY); HOLY NAME OF JESUS; ALL AGES WORSHIP. Scriptures: Ecclesiastes 3:1-13; Luke 2:22-40. This all-ages worship service, conducted in Memorial Hall, includes a recognition of the communitarian values of the season of Kwanza’a by Rev. Elston McCowan and a communitarian sermon by worshipers at the Pastor’s prompting. This will be a fun and spirited ending to 2023!



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