

Welcome!

First Congregational Church
of Webster Groves United Church of Christ



Seek Christ in each. Serve God in all.

DECEMBER 17, 2023
THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT



*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 *In the Bleak Midwinter* Gustav Holst
Oikos Ensemble

WELCOME Ernestine Carter, *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

INTROIT *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* Advent Vespers
Oikos Ensemble

THE WORD SHARED
From the Gospels Luke 1:39-45 Women's Lectionary
Response
Hear what the Spirit is saying to the people.
Thanks be to God.

AT THE ADVENT WREATH THIRD CANDLE: **JOY** The Polaske Family
Traditions Remembered

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

In this season of waiting, of journey, and reimagining what's possible, we find ourselves identifying with our ancestors.

**Their stories are our stories, their songs we still sing, their
silence sits like a friend beside ours.**

On this third Sunday of Advent, we gather around our wreath, ready like Mary and Elizabeth,

welcoming the joy of two kinswomen meeting womb to womb.

Let us rejoice as they did and allow that joy to awaken us into worship.

Come, let us magnify the greatness of God.

***GATHERING HYMN** *Canticle of the Turning* Rory Cooney

My soul cries out with a joyful shout
That the God of my heart is great,
And my spirit sings of the wondrous things
That you bring to the ones who wait.
You fixed your sight on your servant's plight,
And my weakness you did not spurn,
So from east to west shall my name be blessed.
Could the world be about to turn?

Refrain

My heart shall sing of the day you bring.
Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near,

And the world is about to turn.

Though the nations rage from age to age,
We remember who holds us fast:
God's mercy must deliver us
From the conqueror's crushing grasp.
This saving word that our forebears heard
Is the promise which holds us bound,
Till the spear and rod can be crushed by God,
Who is turning the world around. *Refrain*

***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*

inspired by Isaiah 61

Our God loves justice,
and hates robbery and wrongdoing;
God will faithfully give everyone what they are due,
and, with the righteous will make an everlasting covenant.
God calls us into true faithfulness.
Let us unburden ourselves of our sin.

**Prayer of Confession*

Source of all light and joy, we confess that we have accepted shadows and brokenness as if they are the ways of your world. We have had difficulty believing that your grace is sufficient for all our living. Forgive us, we pray. And, as we anticipate the shining of the Light of the World, grant us courage to move more deeply into this season of Advent. Help us to claim joy daily. Draw our attention toward the pleasant glow of living with depth and meaning. Draw our hearts into the larger love that is your way for the world. We pray in the name of the One who is, truly, good news of great joy for all people. Amen.

**Silence for Personal Confessions*

**Words of Assurance*

inspired by Isaiah 61

Let us greatly rejoice in the Holy One who has set our sins aside!
Our whole being shall exult in our God.
We are clothed with the garments of salvation,
and covered with robes of righteousness.

**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!

AT THE JESSE TREE

Rev. David Denoon, *Pastor*

MESSAGE OF THE DAY

The Christmas Story from the *Nelson Children's Bible*
As told by . . .
the Logos Readers
Kids Church Carolers
Oikos Ensemble

Carols

The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came
Basque carol
Oikos Ensemble with Mark Cereghino

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"
Phillips Brooks
The Kids Church Carolers

What Child Is This?
William C. Dix

What child is this who, laid to rest on Mary's lap, is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this the angels sing, is Christ, God's holy offering.
Haste, haste your praises bring the babe, the child of Mary.

Away in a Manger
American carol
The Kids Church Carolers

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice
German carol

Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
Now give heed to what we say: Jesus Christ is born today;
Ox and ass before him bow, asleep within the manger now.
Christ is born today, Christ is born today.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

We Lift Our Joys and Concerns to God

Prayer of the Day

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.

WE SHARE OUR BLESSINGS WITH OTHERS

Opportunities Arising

Mission Moment

The Christmas Fund

*Singing God's Praise

Doxology
words by Paula Meador Testerman

Tune: OLD 100th

**O Glorious God, to you we bring
Praise, treasures, lives as offering;
Spirit of Joy, within us dwell;
Come, Jesus, our Emmanuel. Amen.**

*Prayer of Dedication

God of blessing, we rejoice as children of grace. We rejoice also for the gifts you have given, for the abundance and generosity that fill your house. We ask that our gifts might do good in this world. May they bring hope, peace, and joy to those who need them. Amen.

MEDITATION

Mary, Did You Know?
Mark Cereghino, tenor

Mark Lowry & Buddy Greene

*BENEDICTION

*PARTING WORDS

POSTLUDE

God Rest Ye Merry

English carol

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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Our thanks, this morning, to the Oikos Ensemble – Mark Cereghino, vocals; Carolbeth True, piano; Glen Smith, bass; David True, percussion; and Cliff Aerie, saxophone. Their presence with us not only has allowed us to lift our voices in some creative praise but also has allowed our Music Director Dr. Leon Burke, III, to be away conducting a performance of *Messiah* by G. F. Handel at a church in Harvard, Massachusetts.

The Logos Readers also deserve credit, for their part in this morning's worship. Many thanks to them! They include Andrea Welnick, Sharon Love, Rev. Jan Barnes, and Roger Barnes.

Our thanks, last but certainly not least, to the children and parents of Kids Church with the helpful leadership of Director of Faith Formation Johari Hunt and Christian Education Assistant Noel Burke.

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 only have 14 bags 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) **Stained Glass Stickers.** Use them on your coffee mug, laptop, or anywhere else you can put a sticker! They are only \$5 each.
- 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!

Jazz Noel

TODAY 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? Read more about Jazz Noel at 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.

Hymns for the Hollerdays - December 23

Walter Parks in concert

Guitarist and vocal artist Walter Parks and friends perform the second annual "Hymns for the Hollerdays" concert of historic carols, spirituals, and originals for the season, in Memorial Hall, Saturday, December 23, at 7:00pm. Admission is free.

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

Sunday, December 17

9:45AM Nursery Care
10:00AM Jazz Worship
11:05AM Coffee Fellowship
3:00PM Jazz Noel: Follow That Star! - Sanctuary

Thursday, December 14

~~6:00PM NO Canterbury Bells – Sanctuary~~
~~7:30PM NO Chancel Choir – Music Room~~

Sunday, December 24

Christmas Eve

9:45AM Nursery Care
10:00AM Worship (Lessons and Carols)
11:05AM Wassail Bowl - Narthex
4:30PM Christmas Eve Family Service - Sanctuary
Live Nativity Tableau
*Material and monetary gifts for Gateway 18
will be collected during this service*

Sunday, December 31

New Year's Eve

Kwanza'a, Day 6 – Ku'umba (Creativity)
9:45AM Nursery Care
10:00AM Worship (All Ages)
11:05AM Coffee Fellowship

Monday, December 25, 2023, thru Monday, January 1, 2024
OFFICE CLOSED



GRACE UPON GRACE.

From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

(John 1:16)

"YOUR CHECK ARRIVED JUST IN TIME!"

Each year, the Pension Boards receives many notes and letters of thanks from retired United Church of Christ pastors, their surviving spouses, and children, letting us know what a difference our gifts to the Christmas Fund have made in their lives. Here are just a few excerpts:

"On behalf of my mother, I would like to thank you for the generous check from the Pension Boards. She has recently moved to assisted living at the age of 101! She was choir director at her church up until last year and was playing the organ for worship services once a month for the past 20 years. As a member of the UCC, I have often contributed to the Veterans of the Cross offering and it is wonderful to know my Mom is a beneficiary."

"What a joy to receive a check from the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance as a surprise Christmas gift! My wife (88) and I (95) thank you! It will help greatly in paying our bills at year's end."

"I want to thank you for the generous \$500 that was given to me by your Board. It really has been appreciated as I paid my house taxes for the winter. It would have been a very difficult burden without your check."

"Your check arrived just in time! It helped pay for a much-needed repair to my car, which I rely on since I live in a remote area and need transportation to medical appointments. I feel blessed to be remembered by you and the members of our UCC churches!"

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.



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Webster Groves, MO 63119
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Seek Christ in each. Serve God in all.

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