

Welcome!

First Congregational Church
of Webster Groves United Church of Christ



Seek Christ in each. Serve God in all.

DECEMBER 24, 2023
ADVENT 4 / CHRISTMAS EVE



*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 *Partita in g minor (BWV 1013)* J.S. Bach
III. Saraband
Thomas Welnick, oboe

WELCOME *Andrea Welnick, 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.*

AT THE ADVENT WREATH *Fourth Candle: LOVE* The Hensley / Gomez Family
Traditions Remembered
Preparation

O God of love and light, we arrive at this final Advent candle.

**We kindle in ourselves your light and discover ourselves held
in your embrace.**

We close this circle in love—mercy-filled, abiding love—and familiar words arise
in our minds:

**“God did not send the Son into the world in order to condemn
the world but so that, through him, the world might be saved.”**

We are not alone. We live in God’s love.

**A candle burns, and the graciousness and loving-kindness of
God our Savior appear, leading us to the Christ.**

***GATHERING HYMN** *Gentle Joseph, Joseph Dear* German carol
No. 105 – *New Century Hymnal*

***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.**

RITUAL OF APPROACH

Invitation

Prayer of Confession

**Beloved God, though we’d hope that this season would bring out the
best in us, we sometimes have shown up more impatient than
present, more hardened than heartened. Sometimes the pressure of
the calendar, expectations, old dynamics, and the chaos of life have
caused us to act and even believe that we are far from love and
loving. But remembering that we are never outside your grace, now
we repent and make ready the way for return. We recognize your
Word becoming flesh in ourselves and each other. And may we have
mercy, ever more mercy for ourselves and for all. Amen.**

Silence for Personal Confessions

Words of Assurance

The love of our God is not small. It is not flimsy or trite. It overflows in abundance, like water turning into wine.

It weeps with those who weep and rejoices with those who rejoice.

God's love can be experienced here – believed, understood, and felt.

O Trinity, Divine Community, bless us all now with the wisdom of giving and receiving, of coming together and making space, of grace upon everlasting grace. Amen.

NOT FOR CHILDREN ONLY

Johari Hunt, *Coordinator of Faith Formation*

Children are invited forward for a time of enrichment.

Afterward, they may remain with Mr. Johari for a “Messy Church” exercise in the northwest corner, or return to their families.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

From the Epistles

Titus 3:4-7

Pew Bible, p. 1087

From the Gospels

Matthew 1:18-25

p. 877

Response

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

People: Thanks be to God.

MESSAGE OF THE DAY

“Disquiet in Bethlehem”

Rev. David Denoon, *Pastor*

INTERLUDE

Sonata for Oboe and Piano

Francis Poulenc

I. Elegie

Thomas Welnick, oboe

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

We Lift Our Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

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 OFFER OF OURSELVES

Opportunities to Give and Gather

Mission Moment

The Christmas Fund

Rev. Denoon

“Messy Church” Report

**Song of Praise*

Doxology for Christmas

Tune: OLD 100TH

Praise God with songs that never cease!
Praise God who fills the earth with peace!
Praise God for love and joy within!
The Holy Child is born again. Amen.

**Prayer of Dedication (Unison)*

O God, you make us glad with the yearly expectation of our redemption. Tonight, we will joyfully receive your Child, our Redeemer, and in anticipation we are moved to give to you in return. Bless us and our gifts, as with them we honor our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

***SHARING THE LIGHT**

Ushers will light the candle of the worshiper in each pew nearest the aisles. Tip your unlit candle to your neighbor's lighted candle. There are battery-powered candles for children to use.

**Carol*

Silent Night

Joseph Mohr, Franz Gruber

Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child. Holy Infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight:
Glories stream from heaven afar, heav'nly hosts sing, "Alleluia!"
Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ the Savior is born!

Silent night, holy night! Child of God, love's pure light
Radiant gleams from thy holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

**The Word Shared*

John 1:1-14

Pew Bible, p. 966

**Carol*

Hark! the Herald Angels Sing

Charles Wesley

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies;
With th'angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

Christ, by highest heaven adored; Christ, the everlasting Lord;
Late in time behold him come, offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail th'incarnate Deity,
Pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,
Born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

POSTLUDE

Partita in g minor (BWV 1013)

J.S. Bach

I. Allemande

Thomas Welnick, oboe

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.

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.



The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund Collection TODAY

“Grace upon Grace.” John 1:16

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.

United Church of Christ congregations and members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need. Thank you!

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.

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.

Peace & Justice Team December 31, after worship

For the last two years, First Church has conducted a Day of Service for the Martin Luther King, Jr., Holiday. The MLK Holiday will take place on January 15, 2024. At their next meeting, P&J will be considering whether to host another such event and, among other things, will discuss similar outreach events ("First Saturdays"). *If you would like to know more about how the Day of Service has taken shape in the past, or you have an interest in prompting positive social change in other ways, please consider attending **the next Peace & Justice Team meeting on Sunday, December 31, at 11:20am** in Memorial Hall.*

Pastoral Sabbatical to take place Summer 2024 Presentation on January 28 – (Heritage Sunday) after worship

Pastor Dave Denoon has been discussing his scheduled sabbatical for 2024 with members of the Executive Ministry and Pastoral Relations Committee, for a few months now. It will take place during the summer of 2024. The pastor will be offering a presentation about his upcoming time away on Sunday, January 28, 2024, after worship, as part of our Heritage Sunday observance.

His Terms of Call (the document detailing conditions of his pastorate) require a sabbatical, every seventh year, for the sake of spiritual refreshment. During his last sabbatical (2017), the pastor traveled to West Africa thanks to a grant from the Lilly Endowment. Unfortunately, that funding is provided literally "once in a lifetime." So, this time, the sabbatical will be self-generated by the church and him. **Where is he going? What is he doing? Find out, January 28!**

There's Still Time to Submit Your 2024 Pledge!

The Stewardship Committee reminds members and friends of the church that, if you haven't had the chance yet to make your financial commitment to First Church for 2024, promises of generosity are **still being accepted!** You can go to

FirstChurchWG.org/donate

or use the QR code at right, where you will find a commitment form. Or contact the office for a paper form. Your gifts support all our outreach and programs, making possible some truly transformative ministry! **Because of YOU our church changes lives!**



Remaining December Birthdays

Janet Fales	December 24
Terri Thompson	December 26

January Birthdays

Helen Moody	January 1	Richard Smith	January 14
Coco Denoon	January 7	Bob Hill	January 16
Faye Dyer	January 7	Jan Barnes	January 23
Erin Prange	January 8	Jacquie Bryant	January 26
Roger Barnes	January 11	Ashley Merideth	January 26
Kin Lavender	January 12	Mark Metcalf	January 26

January Shopping List

Boxed Whole Grain Pasta • Canned Green Vegetable (low or no salt)
Canned Fruit in own juices • Sugar free juices in plastic bottles
Powdered Milk, shelf stable milk, soy milk • Cold Cereal (no sugar) • Plain Oatmeal (no sugar)

What's Happening at First Church

Sunday, December 24

Christmas Eve

9:45AM Nursery Care

10:00AM Worship (Candles and Carols)

*Special Offering for "The Christmas Fund"
for Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund*

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

11:20AM Peace & Justice Team (Memorial Hall)

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

OFFICE CLOSED

Tuesday, January 2

1:00PM Communications Team – Church Office

6:30PM Practicing Our Faith – Parlor

Wednesday, January 3

9:30AM Yoga with Jeanene – Inglis Room

6:00PM Bridge Club – Inglis Room

Thursday, January 4

6:00PM Canterbury Bells – Sanctuary

7:30PM Chancel Choir – Music Room

Sunday, January 7

Epiphany

Sacrament of Christ's Table

9:00AM Brown Baggers

9:45AM Nursery Care

10:00AM Worship (All Ages)

11:05AM Coffee Fellowship



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Seek Christ in each. Serve God in all.

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