

Welcome!

First Congregational Church
of Webster Groves United Church of Christ



Seek Christ in each. Serve God in all.

DECEMBER 15, 2024

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.*

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

Words of Assurance

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.

NOT FOR CHILDREN ONLY

Song

Blue Christmas
sung by Martin Mills

Billy Hayes & Jay W. Johnson

THE WORD SHARED

Zephaniah 3:14-20

Pew Bible, p. 862

Response.

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

People: Thanks be to God.

ANTHEM

Are You Lonesome Tonight?
sung by Martin Mills

Roy Turk & Lou Handman

MESSAGE OF THE DAY

"It Gets Better"

Rev. David Denoon, *Pastor*

RITUAL FOR HEALING

Reading

Thoughts on Grief

Patricia Jenzen Schutz

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 (Unison)

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*
- receive an anointing with a healing balm and a blessing from the pastor.*

These options are entirely voluntary.

Prayer for Healing (Unison)

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.

SHARING OUR GIFTS WITH OTHERS

Opportunities for Giving and Gathering

**Response (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.

***PARTING HYMN**

In the Bleak Midwinter
No. 128 – *New Century Hymnal*

Christina Rosetti

***BENEDICTION**

from *Celebration for Wholeness and Healing*

Church of Ireland

***PARTING WORDS**

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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New Members Class Forming

If you would like to know more about First Congregational Church, an **Inquirers Class** is forming. Please contact the Pastor, if you're interested in participating.

WiFi Connection

first_church_guest | passcode: firstguest

Assistive Listening Systems Available

If you have an in-ear listening device connected to your mobile phone, such as hearing aids and stage monitors, you can listen to what's going on in the sanctuary without wearing a separate hearing device. Simply download the **LISTEN WiFi App** from the App Store or the Google Play Store and connect to the special wifi connection **fccwg1** + password "**firstchurch**". *If you need help connecting, please see one of A/V Techs at the table in the southeast corner of the sanctuary.*

Headsets connected to our historic listening system are available from the Narthex table.

Connecting Remotely to Worship

Sunday worship each week is streamed live on YouTube. Past worship and program videos are also available for viewing. Go to 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 library banner) and to the left of the Narthex just before the double doors.

How to Donate (and Pledge!) to First Congregational Church

Treasurer Jennifer Jones and the members of the Stewardship Committee encourage members and friends who have made a pledge for this year, please to be sure and complete your pledge by December 31. Ways to give:

- Place a donation in the **brass offering plate** on the little table in the Narthex.
- Send a check made payable to FCCWG at:
First Congregational Church
10 W. Lockwood Ave.
Webster Groves, MO 63119
- Visit **FirstChurchWG.org/donate**
- Scan the **QR code** at right



To make a pledge for 2025, please take advantage of one of the pledge forms available on the big Narthex table, or go to our website's Donate page – FirstChurchWG.org/donate – by navigating there in your web browser or by using the QR code.

Consecration Sunday may be past, but there's still time to pledge for 2025 and to complete your 2024 pledge

The Stewardship Committee reminds us that there is still time to make a commitment for 2025. Pledge forms are available from the Narthex table, and an electronic form may be completed at our website's Donate page. People who have made commitments in past years but who have not informed the office about their intentions for 2025 can expect a Stewardship Committee member to call before the end of the year.

Treasurer Jennifer Jones joins the Stewardship Committee in encouraging members and friends who have made a pledge for 2024, please to be sure and complete your pledge by December 31!

Poinsettia Sponsorships Still Available!

If you would like to sponsor one of the poinsettias, we are asking for a donation of \$20.00 per plant. You may dedicate your donation in celebration, honor or memory of a loved one or special occasion. ***A list of the dedications will be included in the Christmas Eve service bulletins. Poinsettia order forms are available from the table in the Narthex.***

Cookies Needed, Next Sunday!

The Parish Life Ministry welcomes your homemade cookies for Cookie Sunday, December 22nd. Leftovers will be served as refreshments, that afternoon, following Jazz Noel, and also for the Wassail Bowl reception after the Christmas Eve 9:00 PM service. Thank you!

Jazz Noel – Sunday, December 22 at 3:00PM

This year's Jazz Noel features not only the music of the Oikos Ensemble but also of the Terra Nova Early Music Consort, a recorder ensemble. Please plan to attend this joyous celebration of Christmas music old and new. And bring a friend or two!

Troop 301 Rummage Sale SUCCESS!

Thank you so much for the donations, support, and help for Scout Troop 301's rummage sale. They sold a lot of items! Everyone had a very good time too. The Scouts made \$533 at the sale. Half of the proceeds will be used for activities (like horseback riding). The other half will go to camp credits; that is, they will be distributed in the troop accounts of the Scouts who helped with the sale to pay for their participation in summer camp or other troop activities. Items that remained were donated to Goodwill, except for a few pieces of furniture that are pledged to Home Sweet Home. The Scouts planned and ran the rummage sale. They did an excellent job.

Readers, Ushers and Servers Sought for Lessons & Carols Service

Our annual Candlelight Service of Lessons & Carols, at 9:00PM on Christmas Eve, employs the talents of many church members and friends. If you would like to take part in that worship service as a reader of scripture, as an usher, or as a server at the Wassail Bowl Reception that follows it (or some combination of the three), please contact the Pastor or go to

bit.ly/Eve24-Signups.

Thank you!

Send a Card to a Political Prisoner

Every year, Amnesty International's **Write for Rights campaign** brings together people from around the world to fight injustice and support others whose human rights are under threat. Over the past few years our Writers have made a real difference to people's lives. From Zimbabwe to Guatemala to Kyrgyzstan, activists have been freed and justice has been served.

This year's campaign features people from around the world who are all connected because their human rights have been violated. By writing letters, signing petitions and sharing stories, you can demand justice calling decision makers to do the right thing.

On December 15, watch for Laurel Hayes's table in the Narthex, and join this year's campaign to make the world a more just and compassionate place. If you can't be at church either of those Sundays, follow this link to participate from home: www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/write-for-rights

December Birthdays

Thomas Waltz	December 6
Earl Rinne	December 12
Nannelle Griffith	December 13
Daniel Claggett	December 14
Rebecca Novak	December 16
Terri Thompson	December 26
Neil Hoffsten	December 27

What's Going on at First Church

Sunday, December 15

Blue Christmas

(Service for Healing and Wholeness)

9:45AM Nursery Care Available

10:00AM Worship

10:15AM Kids' Church

11:05AM Coffee Fellowship – Memorial Hall

Monday, December 16

7:00PM Executive Ministry (Zoom)

Tuesday, December 17

10:30AM Staff Meeting – Church Office

Wednesday, December 18

9:30AM Yoga with Jeanene – Inglis Room

6:00PM Bridge Club – Inglis Room

Sunday, December 22

9:45AM Nursery Care Available

10:00AM Worship – “Kids Jazz Noel”

11:05AM Coffee Fellowship – Memorial Hall

3:00PM “Jazz Noel” with the Oikos Ensemble and the Terra Nova Early Music Consort

Tuesday, December 24

Christmas Eve

4:30PM Worship for Families with Living Nativity

9:00PM Candlelight Worship with Lessons & Carols

The Church Office will be closed, December 25, 2024 – January 1, 2025



10 West Lockwood Avenue
Webster Groves, MO 63119
314-962-0475
www.FirstChurchWG.org

Contact Information

Moderator – Doug Barton
iyell4@aol.com

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Events Coordinator – Alicia McMinn
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Custodian & AV Tech – Mark Metcalf
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Weekend & Events Custodians –
Onyeka Igboanuzue

Assistant Custodian – Gus McLean

Director of Ministry of Imagination, Creativity
and the Arts (MICA) – Rev. Cliff Aerie
cliff.aerie@gmail.com

Chaplain, Stillpoint Campus Ministry
Webster University – Rev. Dr. Laurel Hayes
laurel.hayes@sbcglobal.net

Director, Center for Counseling & Healing
Rev. Linda E. Smith, BCRN, HTCP/I
lesrhs@sbcglobal.net

THE VISION of First Congregational Church of Webster Groves, United Church of Christ, is to be a dynamic Christian community expressing God's love, hope, joy, and peace for all people.

OUR MISSION is to provide:

- Worship that praises God
 - ◇ Shows commitment to the teachings of Jesus
 - ◇ Celebrates the Holy Spirit in ways that express the diversity of our experiences
 - ◇ Encourages spiritual growth and commitment
- Educational activities that promote faith and intellectual growth for children and for adults.
- Advocacy and care for those in need in our community and throughout the world.
- Community that seeks justice, loves kindness, and walks humbly.
- Hope, love, and encouragement to all who seek our support.
- Grace and forgiveness for ourselves and all who seek the ministries we share in worship, music, and fellowship with others on life's journey.

Follow us on

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@[FirstChurchWG](https://www.facebook.com/FirstChurchWG)

Instagram

@[webstergroves_firstchurch](https://www.instagram.com/webstergroves_firstchurch)

YouTube

<https://bit.ly/FCCWG-YT>

