
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF ST. LOUIS
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



“Annunciation to Zechariah”
by Lauren Wright Pittman

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT
December 3, 2023 • 10:00 AM

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Adopted by the Council - 2020

The Guiding Principles of First Congregational Church of St. Louis describe the values that guide our church and its members throughout our faith journey. We will...

Practice Extravagant Welcome

- Invite and honor the contributions of every member, quirks and all.
- Be grateful for the gifts and time that each of us dedicate to FCC.

Demonstrate Faithful Leadership

- Value people and our faith community over money and material things.
- Share concerns with the appropriate person and keep discussions and comments of others confidential.
- Celebrate successes, own mistakes, and fail faithfully together and in community.

Engage in Inclusive Decision-Making

- Be thoughtful, respectful, and transparent in our decision making.
- Value building consensus and move forward faithfully once a decision is reached.
- Listen to one another and debate with respect; honor the contributions of every member.

Overall, we will be guided by FCC's mission to Know God's Word, Do God's Work, and Live God's Love.



an Open & Affirming congregation

WELCOME!

Whoever you are, and wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

Restrooms are located down the hall on the main floor.

All Gender Restrooms are located at the back of the sanctuary and downstairs in the Fellowship Hall (which is **accessible**).

Changing tables are located in the Nursery on the main floor and by the restroom at the back of the sanctuary.

Large print hymn sheets are available at each entrance to the sanctuary.

Children are always welcome in worship, either in the pews or at the Playground at the front of the sanctuary. **On the second and fourth Sundays** of the month the nursery is open for infants-age 4 and we have Sunday school for ages 5-5th grade after the Children's Moment.

***An asterisk** is an invitation to rise, in body or spirit.

Bolded text is an invitation for the congregation to read or sing in unison.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

How does a weary world rejoice?

We acknowledge our weariness.



How does a weary
world rejoice?
I would guess
soul by soul
and day by day.
But if you ask me,
I bet most of it counts.

—Rev. Sarah Speed

Prelude

“Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme”
(Sleepers, Awake)

J.S. Bach

Welcome & Announcements

Ann Kittlaus

* Call to the People

Leader: In God’s house, we can be joyful.

People: We can be grateful. We can be hopeful.

Leader: In God’s house, we can be weary.

People: We can be anxious. We can be grieving.

Leader: In God’s house, we can be honest—

**People: Inspired or tired, delighted or doubtful,
connected or curious, and everything in between.**

Leader: This is God’s house. You are welcome exactly as you are.

People: Let us worship our loving God.

* Hymn

#116 “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”

New Century Hymnal

Tune: VENI EMMANUEL

Advent Candle Lighting

*Based on the poem "Wade In"
by Rev. Sarah Speed*

Leader: Over time
wind and water
will sand down the edges of a stone.

**People: For humans,
our wind and water
is the grief of the world.**

Leader: Stay here long enough
and pieces of you
will be pressed upon
by life's never-ending stream.

**People: It's enough to make you weary.
It's enough to make you question.
It's enough to make you quiet.**

Leader: And yet, the stream continues.
So do not be afraid to stand in that water.

**People: Wade in. Soak the hem of your jeans.
Drip wet footprints through every room in your house.**

Leader: Let the water stains tell your story.
And when your body grows weary of swimming,
name the stream.
Acknowledge your weariness.

**People: For eventually,
you will pick flowers from
the opposite bank.**

Leader: And over and over again, we'll tell this story.

**People: And over and over again,
a weary world will rejoice.**

Leader: So today we light the candle of hope as a reminder and a charge.

People: With God's help, may we bring hope into a weary world. Amen.

Lighting of the Candle of Hope

Ardith and John Pierce

Prayers for Community

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Mother, 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.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

Anthem

"Come, O Precious Ransom"

Mark Shepperd

*Come, O precious Ransom, come. Come, O Savior of the world.
Come, only hope for sinful mortals! Come, your beauty let us view;
Anxiously we wait for you. Come, O precious Ransom, come.
Hail! Hail! Hosanna! David's Son! Jesus, hear our supplication!
Come, precious Ransom, come. Come, Glorious King and Lord most holy.
Enter now my waiting heart, dwell in me and ne'er depart.
Come, O precious Ransom, come.*

*** Passing of the Peace**

Children's Moment

Marty Black

Scripture

Luke 1:1-23 (NRSVue)

Ann Kittlaus

Since many have undertaken to compile a narrative about the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, I, too, decided, as one having a grasp of everything from the start, to write a well-ordered account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may have a firm grasp of the words in which you have been instructed.

In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was descended from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. But they had no children because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years.

Once when he was serving as priest before God during his section's turn of duty, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord to offer incense. Now at the time of the incense offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified, and fear overwhelmed him. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God.

Continued on the next page.

Scripture continued.

With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I know that this will happen? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years." The angel replied, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. But now, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will become mute, unable to speak, until the day these things occur."

Meanwhile the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering at his delay in the sanctuary. When he did come out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He kept motioning to them and remained unable to speak. When his time of service was ended, he returned to his home.

Scripture Reflection

Rev. Mia White

Instrumental Meditation

arr. David Cherwein

Communion

Leader: As we come to this table, we are reminded that this is the table of Jesus Christ, a banquet prepared for everyone. All who seek to be nourished and sustained in the journey of faith, all who seek wholeness and compassionate paths to peace and justice, are welcome here.

God be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift our hearts in prayer.

Leader: Let us give thanks to God.

People: It is good to give God thanks and praise.

Leader: Let us pray ...

... Gracious God, Breath of peace,
Source of love, we pray for your Spirit.

People: Make us, while many, one.

Make us, though broken, whole.

Make us, despite death, alive.

Leader: And so we pray:

People: Come, Holy Spirit, come.

Sharing the Bread & Cup

Please come forward by the center aisle to receive a piece of bread and a cup of wine (red) or juice (white). There are individually packaged gluten-free wafers as well. Return to your seat with your elements by the side aisles so we may partake together.

Leader: The body of Christ,

People: The bread of life.

Leader: The new covenant of Christ,

People: The cup of blessing.

Leader: Let us eat and drink together for our strengthening in the faith,
and for the sake of the world.

Prayer after Communion (unison)

**We thank you, God, for breaking into our world
and pouring into our lives and our experiences.
We thank you, God, for this meal of thanksgiving
and the stories of love, grace, and hope that it tells. Amen.**

Anthem

"E'en So, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come"

Paul Manz

*Peace be to you and grace from Him who freed us from our sins,
Who loved us all and shed His blood that we might saved be.
Sing Holy, Holy to our Lord, the Lord, Almighty God,
Who was and is and is to come; Sing Holy, Holy, Lord!
Rejoice in heaven, all ye that dwell therein, rejoice on earth, ye saints below,
For Christ is coming, is coming soon!
E'en so, Lord Jesus, quickly come, and night shall be no more;
They need no light nor lamp nor sun, for Christ will be their all!*

***Blessing**

Leader: Family of faith, as you leave this place,
you go into a weary world—so speak tenderly.

**People: Do the good that is yours to do.
Choose connection. Hold onto hope.**

Leader: And remember that Christ took on flesh for you.
You are God's beloved.

People: So go rejoicing. The world needs it. Amen.

Postlude

"Lift Up Your Heads"

arr. David M. Cherwein

Thank you to those serving this morning:

Marty Black, *Children's Moment*

Ann Kittlaus, *Announcements, Scripture, Usher*

Mary Lou Mellish, *Communion Preparation, Usher*

Chrissy Paterson, *Usher*

Ardith & John Pierce, *Advent Candle Lighters*

"How does a weary world rejoice?" Advent series is from A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

This morning's liturgy was written by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

The Communion Liturgy is adapted from Alydia Smith, The United Church of Canada

Permission to stream the music in this service obtained from One License, license #A-720972



How does a weary world rejoice?

An Advent series in
Luke's Gospel

Our Advent series from A Sanctified Art follows how the Gospel of Luke begins the story of Jesus: by interweaving Christ's birth with the parallel story of Elizabeth, Zechariah, and John the Baptist. In these stories we see the full scope of human emotions: isolation, fear, disbelief, as well as connection, trust, and joy. The Christmas season is often an emotionally-charged time when we feel many things deeply, often experiencing emotional dissonance in the midst of joy-filled carols and festivities.

As we move through Advent, we will acknowledge the weariness of our world while also seeking real and daily moments of joy.

If you would like to go deeper with our Advent series, there are devotionals and Advent calendars available in the Tower Room (front sanctuary entrance). Follow our facebook and instagram pages for daily reflections.

What's happening at FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH



*"God's glory
in this time:
Signs of Hope"
(Proverbs 23:18)*

Christmas Giving Tree

Bring gifts December 10, 10:45-11:45 AM

Join us in supporting our annual Giving Tree partnership with the Child Protection & Permanency Unit (formerly named the Truancy Initiative). The Child Protection and Permanency Unit 4 consists of 7 Deputy Juvenile Officers (DJOs) who are responsible for investigating cases involving allegations of Child Abuse and/or Neglect. They prepare cases for court, visit children in foster care placements, help problem solve, and work with the team to move toward permanency - options include reunification with family, adoption, guardianship and aging out of the system (at age 21).

Our virtual Giving Tree lists children's names, ages, sizes, and gift wishes. We also list the child's race so you can choose toys that might represent them best (especially dolls and figurines). It is up to you which, or how many, gifts to provide. Please bring your wrapped gifts labeled with the child's name and DJO's initials and drop them off in the church parking lot (6501 Wydown Blvd, St. Louis, MO 63105) on **Sunday, December 10 between 10:45-11:45 am**. Please remember to label all the gifts for your child so they're sure to get to the correct family. Visit our SignUpGenius link in the Friday email newsletter to provide gifts this year. You can also take a paper ornament from the children's bulletin board that includes a QR code to lead you to the sign up. Thank you for helping make the holidays special for many children in our region.

Yard Clean-Up Day

Saturday December 16, 8:00 AM

Join Ward Klein on December 16th to rake leaves and clean up our church yard. The rain date is Sunday December 17th in the afternoon. Bring your own rake and help prepare our church grounds for Christmas!

Christmas Pageant

Sunday December 17 during Worship

Come one, come all! Children of all ages! The Christmas Pageant is Sunday, December 17th during 10 AM worship. If you would like a role in the pageant, please contact Sheila Merrell, Chelsea Safe, or the church office. This is an intergenerational extravaganza and there's a part for everyone (both speaking and non-speaking)! Rehearsal will be Saturday December 16 at 10 AM in the Sanctuary.

Blue Yule Worship Service

Wednesday December 20, 7:00 PM

Are you feeling a little blue this season? Have you experienced the loss of a loved one, a job, or peace of mind? Do you need a respite from the Christmas cheer? Come as you are, to the Blue Yule worship service on Wednesday, December 20th at 7 pm in the chapel. Valerie Jackson will lead the service.

Christmas Eve

Sunday December 24

Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday this year, so our leadership has decided we will not have a morning worship service. We will have two evening Christmas Eve services - **5:00 PM** (family-friendly) and **10:00 PM** (lessons & carols).

Sunday Morning Volunteers

Our Sunday morning church experience depends on our members' contributions and leadership. There are several opportunities to get engaged and help lead worship and children's programming. You may serve as an usher, announcement or scripture reader, or communion preparer or server. We also need two adults to watch over our little ones in the nursery and two adults to teach Sunday school on the second and fourth Sundays of the month. Do you feel called to join in on these ministries? You can sign up directly using the link in the email newsletter or the QR code on the back of the bulletin. Contact the church office for more information.

The Red Gate Gallery "Care" Art Show

The "Care" Art Show is now open in The Red Gate Gallery. Check out the artists' interpretations of the theme in the Narthex! You can keep up with The Red Gate on instagram and facebook - @theredgategallery. And if you'd like to support The Red Gate by becoming a sponsor, you may donate online through our church website.

2024 Stewardship

Thank you to those who have submitted your pledge cards. There is still time to make a pledge to support First Congregational Church in 2024. If you would like to make a pledge, there are pledge cards at each entrance to the sanctuary.

Share the Gift of Christmas

As you prepare your gift list this Advent & Christmas season,
please remember the giving opportunities at FCC:

**The Clara B. & Paul S. McElroy
and Tevis Huber & William Stanley Mellish Scholarships**
(providing scholarships for students at Eden Seminary)

The Molly Suzanne Beavers Scholarship Fund
(educational assistance for FCC members)

The UCC Christmas Fund
(One of the Special Mission Offerings of the United Church of Christ,
supporting UCC clergy in times of financial or other crisis)

Make a gift of a Poinsettia
to brighten our Sanctuary: \$20 suggested offering

Please complete this form and turn it in to the church office **by December 17** to be included in the Christmas Eve worship bulletin. If you would like to make your gift in memory/honor of someone, please include those details under "Dedication". Make all checks payable to First Congregational Church with the designation in the memo.

Name: _____ **Total Gift: \$** _____

McElroy/Mellish Funds \$ _____

Dedication:

Beavers Fund \$ _____

Dedication:

UCC Christmas Fund \$ _____

Dedication:

Poinsettia \$ _____

Dedication:



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST
a just world for all

*Whoever you are, and wherever you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here.*

O u r M i n i s t r y T e a m

Mehran Moslehikhah

Maintenance

Tim Clark

Minister of Music

(tclark@firstcongregational.org)

Hannah Rice (MDiv)

Minister of Administration and Membership

(hrice@firstcongregational.org)

Rev. Mia White (MDiv, MATS, CSD)

Senior Minister

(revmia@firstcongregational.org)



Calendar



FCC News



**Online
Giving**



**Worship
Volunteers**

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