



**"Favored One" by Lauren Wright Pittman**  
Inspired by Luke 1:26-38

**WORDS**  
**FOR THE BEGINNING**  
— YOU ARE A BLESSING —

**THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**DECEMBER 1, 2024 • 10:00 AM**



a just  
world  
for all  
[ucc.org](http://ucc.org)

*an Open & Affirming congregation*

## 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.**

## WELCOME

**to First Congregational Church of St. Louis!**

*an Open & Affirming congregation of  
the United Church of Christ*



**If you are visiting with us**, we invite you to share your contact information on a Connect Card, found in each pew. You may give your card to an usher or place it in an offering box at either entrance to the sanctuary. You may also scan the QR code on the card to access the digital version.

**Restrooms on the main level** are located at the back of the sanctuary and in the office. An accessible restroom is downstairs in the Fellowship Hall.

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

**Offering Boxes** are located at each sanctuary entrance.

**Children** are always welcome in worship, either in the pews or at the Playground at the front of the sanctuary. We have Sunday school each week for elementary-aged children downstairs in the Purple Room during worship. The children will return to the sanctuary at the end of the service.

**\*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.



**Prelude**

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

*Charles Callahan*

**Lighting the Candle of Hope**

*June Wiens, 2024 Confirmand*

Leader: In a weary and worn world, how do we begin again?  
Where do we start?

**People: Let us begin with the good news! Let us begin by trusting  
that we are a blessing, loved by a gracious God.  
Let us begin with music and singing!  
Let us begin with warmth and welcome. Let us begin with hope.**

Leader: Yes, let us begin with hope. Today we light the candle of hope  
to shine a light in a worn and weary world.

**People: May this be our foundation. May this be our fresh start.  
May this be our new beginning.**

Leader: May hope flow forth from here. Amen!

**Introit**

“E’en So, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come”

*Paul Manz*

**\*Call to the People**

Leader: God says, “Do not be afraid.”

**People: God says, “I have called you by name.”**

Leader: God says, “I will be with you.”

**People: God says, “You are precious and honored in my sight.”**

Leader: At the beginning of this season,

**People: at the start of this week,**

Leader: at the top of this hour,

**People: may we wrap ourselves in these words. May we begin again.**

Leader: Let us worship our Holy God!

## **\*Hymn**

#116 "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"  
verses 1, 2, 6, & 7

*New Century Hymnal*  
Tune: VENI EMMANUEL

## **Communion**

### **Invitation to the Table**

### **The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving**

### **Sharing of the Bread & Cup**

Please come forward by the center aisle to receive a piece of bread or gluten-free wafer and a cup of wine (red) or juice (white). Return to your pews by the side aisles with your elements so we may partake together.

### **Prayer after Communion (unison)**

**Nourishing God,**

**Sometimes we tell ourselves that too much has taken place  
to begin again. We think the world is too far gone.**

**We think we have made too many mistakes.**

**We tell ourselves that we couldn't possibly begin again.**

**But then we come to this Table and we get a glimpse of your kingdom.**

**We come to this Table and all are welcomed, all are seen, all are fed.**

**And just like that, we have hope. Just like that, we begin again.**

**Thank you for the gift of this fresh start.**

**Thank you for planting hope deep in our bones.**

**Thank you for meeting us in ordinary bread and juice to remind us  
that it's never too late to build your kingdom here. We are grateful.**

**We are so grateful. Amen.**

## **\*Passing of the Peace**

## **Announcements**

Ann Kittlaus

## **Anthem**

**"Come, O Precious Ransom"**

*Mark Shepperd*

*Come, O precious Ransom, come.*

*Come, O Savior of the world.*

*Come, precious Ransom, 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.*

*Glorious King and Lord most holy.*

*Enter now my waiting heart, dwell in me and ne'er depart.*

*Come, O precious Ransome, come.*



In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

**Reflection**

Rev. Mia White

**Prayers for the 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.**

**Poetry for Advent**

**"Joy and Celebration"**  
by Rev. Sarah Speed

Hannah Rice

*You are a blessing.  
If you hear nothing else,  
if the wind howls,  
if your brain runs amok,  
if rebuttals and denials line up like little  
toy soldiers,  
then hear this—  
you are a blessing.*

*I knew it the first moment I met you / heard  
your name / learned there are 7 billion of us  
on this planet.  
I knew it in my bones,  
the way my feet know the way home.  
You are a blessing.*

*For our creating God  
breathed life into your being.  
And there is simply no way that,  
along with that life,  
some of God's goodness  
didn't slip right in.*

*So tell the rebuttals to rest.  
Tell the toy soldiers to find another hill,  
because this one is reserved for joy and  
celebration.  
You are a blessing.  
Breathe it in.*

## Anthem

## “Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence”

Gustav Holst

*Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and with fear and trembling stand;  
ponder nothing earthly minded, for with blessing in his hand,  
Christ our Lord to earth descendeth, our full homage to demand.*

*King of Kings, yet born of Mary, as of old on earth he stood,  
Lord of Lords, in human vesture, in the body and the blood.  
He will give to all the faithful his own self for heavenly food.*

*Rank on rank the host of heaven spreads its vanguard on the way,  
as the light of light descendeth from the realms of endless day,  
that the powers of hell may vanish as the darkness clears away.*

*At his feet the six-winged seraph; cherubim with sleepless eye,  
veil their faces to the presence, as with ceaseless voice they cry,  
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Lord most High.*

## \*Blessing

Leader: As you leave this place, may you have the wisdom to lean on one another.

**People: May we have the courage to hold onto hope,  
the compassion to do the good that is ours to do,  
and the confidence to trust that God sees us as a blessing.**

Leader: For in a world full of dead ends, Advent invites us to begin again.  
So start here.

**People: We start now. We start with love and begin again.  
In the name of Christ, our new beginning, we go in peace.**

## \*Hymn

#117 “Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates”

New Century Hymnal

Tune: TRURO

## Postlude

“Truro”

arr. Jerry Westenkuehler

**Please join us after worship for Coffee Hour, the Red Gate  
“Open Window” closing, and a holiday pop-up vendor market!**

**Thank you to those serving this morning:**

**Communion Preparer:** Mary Lou Mellish

**Ushers/Communion Servers:** Mary Lou Mellish, Chrissy Paterson, Melissa Wurst

**Announcements:** Ann Kittlaus

**Scripture Reader:** Valerie Jackson

**Advent Candle Lighter:** June Wiens

Today's liturgy is by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

Scripture: New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition. © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ.

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

# What's happening at FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH



## **Giving Tree**

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 is one of 4 units at Family Court that works with children in foster care. 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 on Sunday, December 15 between 10:45 am - 12:00 pm.** Please remember to label all the gifts for your child so they're sure to get to the correct family. Scan the QR code to sign up online. We have 55 children on our list this year; thank you for helping make the holidays special for this group of St. Louis youth.



## **Annual Leaf Pick-Up - Sat. Dec. 7, 9:00 AM**

Join our chair of Stewardship & Administration, Ward Klein, in a leaf raking party this Saturday! BYO rake or leaf blower!

## **December Children's Activity - Sat. Dec. 7, 12-2 PM**

The last monthly children's ministry activity is scheduled for December 7 at 12:00 in the Fellowship Hall. We will celebrate with karaoke, music, and games! Please RSVP to Joyce Haynes McCowan.

## **Christmas Pageant - Sunday December 15**

Our Minister of Faith Formation, Joyce Haynes McCowan, is planning this year's Christmas pageant, which we'll present during worship on December 15. Whether you enjoy singing, acting, or helping to coordinate, there is a role for everyone to play! If you are interested in participating, please contact Joyce.

## **Rev. Dr. Dietra Wise Baker - Sun. Dec. 15 after Worship**

In 2025, we will begin a racial justice program at First Congregational. On Sunday Dec 15th, Rev. Dr. Dietra Wise Baker, Associate Professor at Eden Seminary, will give a preliminary one-hour talk on racial justice. You won't want to miss this talk as we will need your input in shaping FCC's racial justice program.

## **Advent Coffee Hour**

We would love to have coffee hours each Sunday of Advent following worship. We make the coffee and the coffee hour host provides the treats (plus set-up/clean-up). Multiple people can sign up each Sunday! Sign up outside the church office or online.

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF ST. LOUIS**  
**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**



## **Our Ministry Team**

**Bert Merrell**, Sunday Sexton

**LaBar Verner**, Custodian

**Mehran Moslehikhah**, Maintenance

**Tim Clark**

Minister of Music

(tclark@firstcongregational.org)

**Joyce Haynes McCowan** (MDiv)

Minister of Faith Formation

(jhaynesmccowan@firstcongregational.org)

**Hannah Rice** (MDiv)

Minister of Administration and Membership

(hrice@firstcongregational.org)

**Rev. Mia White** (MDiv, MATS, CSD)

Senior Minister

(revmia@firstcongregational.org)



**Online  
Giving**



**FCC News**



**Website**



**Calendar**



**Worship  
Volunteers**

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