



## THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 8, 2024 • 10:00 AM



*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.

# THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

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## Prelude

“Watchman, Tell Us of the Night” *arr. Robert J. Powell*

## Lighting the Candle of Peace

Owen Solomon, 2024 *Confirmand*

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

**People: Let us begin together. Let us begin arm in arm.  
Let us begin by holding each other up,  
instead of tearing each other down.  
Let us begin with words of peace.**

Leader: Yes, let us begin with peace. Today we light the candle of peace.

**People: May this light remind us of what could be.  
May this light mark a new beginning.  
May peace flow like a river, and may it start with us.**

Leader: Arm in arm, hand in hand, side by side. May we begin again. Amen.

## Introit

“E’en So, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come”

*Paul Manz*

## \*Call to the People

Leader: In a world that is lonely,

**People: we will save a seat for you.**

Leader: In a world that is anxious,

**People: we will light candles against the gloom.**

Leader: In a world that is weary,

**People: we will sing songs of joy and truth.**

Leader: I am not alone.

**People: We are not alone.**

Leader: For here in this place, God is weaving us together.

**People: Light the candles! Sing with joy!  
We are a three-cord strand, not easily broken.**

## \*Hymn

#101 "Comfort, Comfort O My People"

*New Century Hymnal*

*Tune: PSALM 42*

## \*Passing of the Peace

## Announcements

## Anthem

"Every Valley"  
Aiden Smith, Soloist

*G.F. Handel*

*Every valley shall be exalted  
And every mountain and hill made low  
The crooked straight  
And the rough places plain*

## A Story for the Ages

Luke 3:1-6

David Greenhaw

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
'Prepare the way of the Lord;  
make his paths straight.  
Every valley shall be filled,  
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
and the crooked shall be made straight,  
and the rough ways made smooth,  
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.' "

## 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** “When Will You Be Back?”  
by Rev. Sarah Speed

Hannah Rice

Yesterday I visited an old man in the hospital.  
I was not the only one. We talked on the elevator ride down—  
*Has he gained any weight? Will he stay in that room?*  
*Does he like the food? Has he called?*  
All the man wanted to know was, *When will you be back?*  
We ask that question in a thousand different ways  
every single day,  
our hearts leaning over themselves,  
bending to get closer to love.  
We say, *Text me when you're home.*  
*Call me when you're free.*  
*One more kiss!*  
*I love you all the time.*  
*When will you be back?*  
What we really mean is—  
I can't go through life alone.  
Please don't let me go through life alone.

**Anthem**

**“No Night There”**

Dan Forrest

*God is with us; God is for us; do not be afraid.*  
*There shall be no night there, no crying there,*  
*God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.*  
  
*Even in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil;*  
*Lo, I am with you always, even to the end.*  
  
*There shall be no night there. No crying there,*  
*God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.*  
  
*No night there, / God is with us, God is for us*  
*There shall be no crying there, / God is with us, God is for us,*  
*God shall wipe away every tear / Do not be afraid,*  
*from their eyes / I am with you, I am for you.*  
*Do not be afraid.*  
*God is with us, God is for us.*  
*No night there.*

**\*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** #115 “The Baptist Shouts on Jordan’s Shore” *New Century Hymnal*  
Tune: WINCHESTER NEW

**Postlude** “Winchester New” *arr. Christopher Tambling*

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

David Greenhaw, *Scripture*

Owen Solomon, *Advent Candle Lighter*

Jon Tiede, *Usher*

Stewardship & Administration Ministry Team, *Coffee Hour Hosts*

## **COMING UP NEXT SUNDAY - DECEMBER 15**

### **THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**10 AM WORSHIP** - Lighting the Candle of Joy | Christmas Pageant

#### **Intergenerational Christmas Pageant**

Next Sunday during worship we will experience our Christmas pageant - a creative way to reflect on Advent and the Christmas season. There are still opportunities to participate, so if you're interested, contact Joyce Haynes McCowan.

**AFTER WORSHIP** - Coffee Hour | Guest Speaker | Giving Tree Gifts

#### **Guest Speaker: Rev. Dr. Dietra Wise Baker**

In 2025, we will begin a racial justice program at First Congregational. After worship next Sunday, 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.

#### **Giving Tree Gift Drop-Off**

If you are providing gifts for children from our Giving Tree partnership, please drop them off in the church parking lot between 10:45 AM - 12:00 PM next Sunday. See the next page for all the details!



## **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.



## **The Fourth Sunday of Advent - December 22**

For the fourth Sunday of Advent, let's celebrate the joy of the season in style - or lack thereof! Wear your most festive, bold, or downright obnoxious Christmas attire, whether it's an ugly Christmas sweater, flashy holiday accessories, or anything that proclaims "holiday cheer!" After worship, stick around for coffee hour and a fun time decorating ugly Christmas sweater cookies. It's a festive way to gather, laugh, and create sweet memories together. We can't wait to see your bright and bold Christmas spirit!

## **Christmas Eve Services - December 24, 5 PM & 10 PM**

### **5:00 PM Family-Friendly Candlelight Service**

A service for all ages, including the Christmas story, familiar carols, and the singing of "Silent Night" by candlelight (or glow stick candles for the kids!).

### **10:00 PM Lessons & Carols Candlelight Service**

The Christmas story as told in the Gospel of Luke, interspersed with choir and congregational carols, concluding with the singing of "Silent Night" by candlelight.

## **2025 Stewardship**

Thank you to those who have turned in your 2025 pledge cards, which helps us plan for the coming year. If you would like to make a pledge, there are extra pledge cards at each entrance to the sanctuary, and you can also complete your pledge online by scanning the QR code.



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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