

Welcome to First Congregational Church



Blues Musicians
Purvis Young, 1990s
Mixed media on panel
48 x 46 inches
Crystal Bridges Museum

Young documents the African American community in Miami.
He often uses cast off materials found in the streets.

Announcements

Advent Video Discussion: Following worship TODAY (and Dec 14th) everyone is invited to join us for this year's advent video discussion series, in-person and on Zoom.

Outreach: Please take an angel from the bulletin board for the Salvation Army Christmas Toys for children. Return gifts by December 10th. Thank You Sana Nichols

Weekly Prayers for the Nation: Join Rev. Renee' for a weekly hour of prayer for our nation on Zoom. Wednesdays at 1pm. Zoom link is in the weekly E-News and in the calendar on the website.

Pastor Emilia's New Work Cell Phone: Pastor Emilia has a new cell phone number for work 617-762-6488. You are also welcome to continue calling the church office number and leaving a message on her voicemail, if you prefer.

2025 Advent & Christmas Activities and Services

[We are following the Celtic Christian tradition of 40 days of Advent this year, which makes for 2 additional Advent Sundays]

Sunday, December 7th

9:30-10:30 am - Greening the Chapel
10:30-11:30 am - Fourth Advent (Peace) with Communion
11:30-12:15 - Celtic Christian Advent Discussion

Sunday, December 14th

10:30-11:30 am - Fifth Advent (Joy) & Hanging of the Chrismons
11:30-12:15 - Celtic Christian Advent Discussion

Sunday, December 21st

2:30-4:30 pm - Jazz Sanctuary; Sixth Advent (Love)

Wednesday, December 24th

6-7pm - Candlelight Christmas Eve Service (Christ)

Sunday, December 28th

10:30-11:30 am Worship service with Christmas Hymn Sing

Sunday, January 4th

10:30-11:30 am Epiphany worship service with Communion
11:30 Coffee hour

**Your smartphone wants to know what's happening at First Church!
Scan this QR code with your phone's camera.**



Shepherds, in the field abiding, watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing; yonder shines the infant light: **[Refrain]**

Sages, leave your contemplations, brighter visions beam afar;
seek the great desire of nations; guided by Christ's natal star: **[Refrain]**

Saints, before the altar bending, watching long in hope and fear;
Suddenly, your prayers attending, Christ beside you shall appear. **[Refrain]**

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLES (created by Pastor Emilia with ChatGPT)

[Relight the Candle for the Creator, Holy Spirit, and Hope]

In Advent, we acknowledge how heavy the world can feel—
how a single troubling thought can weigh more than stone,
how our bodies carry the invisible burdens of our inner lives.

**We long for peace that lightens what feels too heavy,
peace that steadies our steps and quiets our restless minds.**

And yet, within each of us shines a holy light—the light of God's presence dwelling in
these very bodies, speaking through every gesture, revealing our deepest longings for
wholeness and rest.

**We come seeking the peace that honors the humanity of all your people, the
peace that lets the body remember how to move with grace.**

On this fourth Sunday of Advent, we light the candle of Peace, knowing that Christ
meets in this moment.

[Light the Candle for the Peace]

May this flame remind us that peace is not the absence of movement but the gentle
rhythm of God's love steadying our bodies and blessing our paths.

**Prince of Peace, settle our spirits, soften our thoughts, and guide our bodies
into the quiet freedom of your grace. Amen.**

Hear now our modern lesson: From *Black Portsmouth: Three Centuries of African-*
American Heritage by Valerie Cunningham and Mark J. Sammons

Here ends the Lesson.

Amen.

Hear now from the Gospel of Luke...

Rev. Renee` Rouse

Gospel Lesson Luke 10:38-42 (The Voice)

Jesus continued from there toward Jerusalem and came to another village. Martha,
a resident of that village, welcomed Jesus into her home. Her sister, Mary, went
and sat at Jesus' feet, listening to Him teach. Meanwhile Martha was anxious about
all the hospitality arrangements.

Continued on next page

Martha, interrupting Jesus, said, "Lord, why don't you care that my sister is leaving me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to get over here and help me." Jesus replied, "Oh Martha, Martha, you are so anxious and concerned about a million details, but really, only one thing matters. Mary has chosen that one thing, and I won't take it away from her."

Here ends the Lesson.

Amen.

Hear now from the Gospel of Matthew...

Rev. Renee` Rouse

Gospel Lesson Matthew 18:1-5 (The Message)

At about the same time, the disciples came to Jesus asking, "Who gets the highest rank in God's kingdom?"

For an answer Jesus called over a child, whom he stood in the middle of the room, and said, "I'm telling you, once and for all, that unless you return to square one and start over like children, you're not even going to get a look at the kingdom, let alone get in. Whoever becomes simple and elemental again, like this child, will rank high in God's kingdom. What's more, when you receive the child-like on my account, it's the same as receiving me.

Here ends the Gospel Lesson.

Amen.

SERMON "When We Fell Out of Animal Presence, was Dance Our First Language?"

Rev. Emilia Halstead

PAUSE FOR REFLECTION

Song: #101

Comfort, Comfort O My People (Public Domain)

"Comfort, comfort O my people, tell of peace", thus says our God.

Comfort those whose hearts are shrouded, mourning under sorrows' load.

Speak onto Jerusalem of the peace that waits for them,

Tell them that their sins I cover, and their warfare now is over.

For the herald's voice is calling in the desert far and near,

Bidding us to make repentance since the kingdom of God is here.

Oh, that warning cry obey! Now prepare for God a way;

Let the valleys rise in meeting and the hills bow down in greeting.

Straight shall be what long was crooked, and the rougher places plain!

Let your hearts be true and humble, for the Messiah's holy reign;

For God's glory evermore shall be known o'er all the world;

And all flesh shall see the token that God's word is never broken.

Global Ministries Weekly Prayers: Indonesia

(Prayer and Mission Moment written by Rev. Jeniffer F. P. Wowor, PhD., an Assistant Professor of Christian Religious Education and Practical Theology, with the Faculty of Theology, Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana, Yogyakarta, and a pastor with the Gereja Protestan di Indonesia bagian Barat (GPIB, the Protestant Church in the Western part of Indonesia).

Mission Moment from Indonesia

Responsive Prayers with Indonesia

Dear God, the Holy and blessed Trinity, we pray for Indonesia.

We thank you for the gift of this beautiful country and for blessing us with diversity. Please bless Indonesia, so that it truly lives up to its motto, "Unity in Diversity."

Often, our people embrace "unity in uniformity." This situation leads to conflict and a perpetual cycle of violence. Please grant us your grace for the victims and survivors of violence throughout Indonesian history and their families. Please strengthen marginalized groups excluded from society, who must endure multiple layers of oppression in the postcolonial context. Pour out your wisdom to the leaders of the nation and churches in Indonesia to stand in solidarity with the reality of oppression that continues to this day.

We pray for our university. May the UKDW continue to be blessed to be a blessing, in our active and transformative waiting for the coming of Christ. May the ministry, education, and community service of our university and all its supporting church synods be blessed by your grace. May your grace always guide all of us, from now until forever. AMEN.

Prayers of the People

(Response to each prayer:)

God of the Child-like Spirit,

Receive our prayers.

Pastoral Prayer (created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)

Lord's Prayer:

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 debts as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Sung Amen: #553 There Is a Balm in Gilead (African American Spiritual)

Refrain: There is a balm in Gilead, to make the wounded whole,
There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.

Offertory

Invitation (created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)

GRATITUDE MUSIC

Leap Over the Stone (trad. Welsh)

Annie Papinsick

LITANY OF DEDICATION (created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)

God of peace and promise, we dedicate these gifts to your work of healing and hope. May they move through this community the way grace moves through the body—quietly strengthening, gently encouraging, creating possibilities for joy and transformation. Take what we offer and make it enough. Take who we are and make us instruments of your peace. Amen.

COMMUNION

(We serve gluten-free bread and grape juice.)

SONG: #120

There's a Voice in the Wilderness

There's a Voice in the Wilderness/ ASCENSION, Henry Hugh Bancroft

Tune: © 1979 admin Augsburg Fortress Text: Public Domain

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1 There's a voice in the wilderness crying, a call from the ways untrod:

Prepare in the desert a highway, a highway for our God!

The valleys shall be exalted, the lofty hills brought low;

make straight all the crooked places where Emmanuel may go!

2 O Zion, who offers good tidings, to the height of the mountains dare!

Lift your voice to the cities of Judiah: "Behold your God!

The flowers of the field we perish, our human works decay,

The power and pomp of nations shall pass like a dream away.

3 But the Word of our God is forever, our Defender's will is strong.

God stands in the midst of nations, to render right the wrong.

Then God shall be as a shepherd, the lambs gathered to God's breast;

and pastures of peace shall great them, to give to the weary rest.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

"Not A Test" (*Trigger warning: eating disorder*)

by Mary Luti, pgs. 28-29 in *Do This*

COMMUNION LITURGY

"It's Not the Same without You"

by Liz Miller, pgs. 31-33 in *Do This*

CLOSING SONG: #104

We Hail You God's Anointed

We Hail You God's Anointed, Contributors: James Montgomery

Tune: Text: CMD; James Montgomery, 1821; alt. Music: Gesangbuch der Herzogl, Wirtembergischen Katholischen Hofkapelle, 1784. Text: word alterations (c) The Pilgrim Press

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We hail you God's anointed, the long awaited One!

Hail, in the time appointed, your reign on earth begun!

You come to break oppression, to set the captive free;

To take away transgression, and rule in equity.

You shall come down like showers upon the fruitful earth;

And joy and hope, like flowers, spring in your path to birth:

Before you on the mountains shall peace, the herald, go;

And righteousness, in fountains, from hill to valley flow.

The wise shall bow down before you and gold and incense bring;

All nations shall adore you, and praise all people sing;

To you shall prayer unceasing and daily vows be said,

your realm is still increasing, with you, O Christ as head.

O'er every foe victorious, you on your throne shall rest,

From age to age more glorious, all-blessing and all-blessed.

The tide of time shall never your covenant remove;

Your name shall stand forever, your changeless name of Love.

Setting our Intentions for the Week Ahead

Greatest Commandment

Benediction & Sending (created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)

Postlude

Josefin's Waltz, Roger Tallroth (Used with permission)

Annie Papinsick