



Advent

Keeping in Touch

We are a creative Christian community,
Caring for one another
inviting others to experience the power of God's love,
that God might use us to transform ourselves, our community,
the Church and the world.

first united
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Established 1886
November 25, 2011

www.fulc.com

The Season of Advent is here.

Next Sunday, Dec. 4—
a special event in our First United community:

Confirmation of Stephanie Barrow

Come show your love and support for Stephanie, who has grown up in and with the First United community, and for the Barrow family.

QUOTATION OF THE WEEK

There's nothing more radical, nothing more revolutionary, nothing more subversive against injustice and oppression than the Bible. If you want to keep people subjugated, the last thing you place in their hands is a Bible.—Desmond Tutu



PASTOR'S MESSAGE

Pastor Susan Strouse

Here we go—into Advent once more! The season of mixed messages! The Advent calendar, symbol of delayed gratification, offers you just one door per day. It whispers, “Wait. Wait. Wait,” while all around, other calendars shout, “Go! Go! Go!” No longer constrained even by secular traditions, stores call to us to get a jump on ‘Black Friday’ and head in to shop right after Thanksgiving dinner. Some stores will even be open all night long for our shopping convenience. Of course the sales are the draw. Budgets are tight this year. If we’re going to put on a nice Christmas and fulfill all the wishes on everyone’s gift lists, we’d better suck it up and get in line. Or not. I encourage you to watch this video from the Advent Conspiracy: <http://ac.wcrossing.org>. It’s very well done. Not a “Bah, humbug!” but a call to ‘Worship Fully—Spend Less—Give More—Love All.’ And I would add ‘Wait!’

Advent blessings,
Pastor Susan

This Week on PS (Pastor Susan’s Blog)—
‘Tis the (Countercultural) Season
<https://progressivechurch.wordpress.com>

First United is a "Reconciling in Christ" (RIC) congregation that has declared that all persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities are equally welcome to join fully in the worship and life of this Christ-centered community.

**First United Lutheran Church is committed to accessibility to the extent that it is within our control.
Please let us know if we can be of assistance in accommodating your accessibility needs.**

Prayers for the First Sunday of Advent

*Creator of the world,
you are the potter, we are the clay, and you form us in your image.
Shape our spirits by Christ's transforming power,
that as one people we may live out your compassion and justice,
whole and sound in the realm of your peace. Amen*



<http://www.ucc.org/feed-your-spirit/weekly-seeds/>

- ✦ for the Peace of God to be made manifest in our world:
 - ☞ for the people of Yemen, Egypt, and Libya
 - ☞ for the leaders of the nations to be good stewards of the power entrusted to them
 - ☞ for all suffering effects of drought, famine, political unrest and instability
 - ☞ for our national leaders to find a way out of the stalemate of partisan politics
 - ☞ for thanksgiving and gratitude to spread throughout the world

- ✦ for the Wisdom of Christ to be made manifest in our communities:
 - ☞ for an extra measure of gratitude in this Thanksgiving season
 - ☞ for *SF Care, SF Night Ministry, SAGE, Welcome, Lutheran Social Services*, and all who serve the needs of our city
 - ☞ for the Winter Shelter and all shelters, and for the people who come for food and a safe place to sleep
 - ☞ for workable and just solutions to the problems of homelessness
 - ☞ for World AIDS Day: for ongoing awareness, remembrance, treatment, and prevention

- ✦ for the Power of the Spirit to be made manifest in our congregation and beyond:
 - ☞ for Roger Creet and Alan Pearson
 - ☞ for Barbara Vignola, Daryl Hackbart, Bishop Mark Holmerud and all in need of healing
 - ☞ for the upcoming World AIDS Day service
 - ☞ for Stephanie Barrow, preparing for Confirmation
 - ☞ for an Advent season of centeredness and holy reflection

♫ *If you would like to add someone or something to the prayer list, please contact Orion or Pastor Susan.* ♫

PRAYERS IN ACTION

We are collecting cards, notes, pictures, etc. for our homebound members. There will be an envelope for each at every service. You can put your items into the envelopes, which will be sent or delivered at the end of each month. This is an ongoing project of love and support for those who are unable to physically be part of our community, but are members of it nevertheless.



Questions/Comments About Our Worship?

Many elements go into the worship experience each week at First United to make it unique. The Worship Team would love to hear from you! Whether it's something you really liked, or something that may have concerned or puzzled you—please contact a member of the worship team:

Pastor Susan (pastorsusan@fulc.com)
Steve Johnson (treasurer@fulc.com)
Orion (orion@fulc.com)

OUR COMMUNITY

Updates—Life at First United and beyond.



Bicycle needed
Does anyone have a bicycle (adult size) you're not using?

Help First United Improve Accessibility for All!



Donate through www.causes.com/

Our project is http://www.causes.com/campaigns/180976?cause_id=637870

This Just In! We have received a \$500 challenge grant for the purchase of text-reading software for Roger Creet's computer. Let's get it done by Christmas!

(A hearty and gracious THANKS to Terri Bogaards, who has worked diligently to create and put in working order this Causes website!)

*Nine of the First United Community attended the 2011 Interfaith Thanksgiving Prayer Breakfast this past Tuesday morning (at 7:00 am!). Also in attendance were **US House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, SF Mayor Ed Lee, CA Senator Mark Leno**, and others (First United keeps very good company . . .); all to honor the lifelong interfaith work of the remarkable Rita Semel, who, at age 90, shows no signs of slowing down. The first words from the diminutive Rita, upon taking the stage after more than an hour of accolades were, in her dry and concise manner,*

“This is embarrassing!”



Marilyn has a story to tell at First United Lutheran Church table at the San Francisco Interfaith Council Thanksgiving Prayer Breakfast.

(And THANKS to Kirk Pessner & Russell Miller, who through their generosity made a First United table available!)



PROSECUTE RAPE IN THE MILITARY

A Special Message from Kirk Pessner

Here is the link to the Protect Our Defenders website:

www.protectourdefenders.com

Our firm is legal counsel to this non-profit. Their goal is to let service members speak out about rape under the color of authority while serving in the armed forces and the way such rapes have been handled in the military. It is a most shocking and compelling story of those who have come forward on the website.

There is a petition signing effort to have Congress pass legislation to change the personnel to whom such heinous activity is reported, thus providing a more justice-based outcome for all involved. Congresswoman Jackie Speier is the author of the legislation.

Schedule announcements, changes, and updates.

SCHEDULE CHANGE: DISCOVERY GROUP/SECOND SUNDAY SCHOOL—DEC. 11 AT 3:00 PM

Kirk Pessner will lead a discussion of what it means to be good stewards.

Everyone is invited, especially if you are new to First United.

SOMETHING NEW COMING IN ADVENT:



Beginning on the First Sunday in Advent, we will include lighting and extinguishing our candles on the altar as a part of our worship ritual. At first, worship leaders will take responsibility for lighting and extinguishing the candles, since there are specific concerns regarding the use of the candle-lighter. Once it has become a regular part of our “routine”, all (especially the kids and their parents) are invited to participate in the candle-lighting and extinguishing. The candles will be lit during the prelude, and extinguished immediately following the announcements. (Please note that, while this is beginning in Advent, it is separate from, and in addition to, our lighting of the Advent wreath, which comes at a particular time in the worship service.) Also, there will regularly be unlit votives on a table adjacent to the altar for worshipers to light during the communion time—this may be in memory of a loved one, for a special prayer, or simply to add a contemplative focus to your worship experience.

(A special note of thanks and appreciation to Kirk Pessner for making this suggestion as an enhancement to our worship experience.)

ALSO COMING IN ADVENT:

The 4th Sunday in Advent (December 18) worship service will be, continuing from last year, a special Advent service of Lessons & Carols. Plan now to attend this story of the coming of Jesus told in scriptures and in music—special music, familiar carols, and the foretelling of the coming of Messiah from both Old and New Testament scriptures put the Advent/Christmas story in a familiar and complete perspective.

FIRST UNITED’S SCHEDULE FOR CHRISTMAS

Christmas is coming (just go shopping—you’ll be reminded *ad nauseum*). In order for you to plan ahead, the worship team announces First United’s Christmas schedule, which is especially tricky this year since Christmas Day falls on Sunday:



Saturday, December 24—Christmas Eve Worship Service, 7:00 pm at Ebenezer/ herchurch Lutheran.

Sunday, December 25—Christmas Day; no First United community worship service. A family/home worship service that you may choose to observe with your family and friends will be provided online on the FULC website, www.fulc.com.

This Sunday's Readings

First Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 64:1-9

Isaiah's words are an existential confession rather than a theological treatise. It feels to Isaiah like our pain must be God's doing: God must be punishing us, withdrawing God's presence, because we have gone astray. God is angry at us and God's anger takes the form of apparent abandonment. Isaiah and his community are going through a severe case of 'separation anxiety,' assuming that God's distance, which allows for freedom and creativity, is tantamount to God's abandonment and anger. Perhaps, as later Jewish mysticism suggests, God must withdraw for creation to burst forth in creativity and freedom

It is written . . .

O that you would rend the heavens and come down,
that the mountains would shake before you!
As fire kindles the brushwood
and the fire makes water boil,
make your Name known to your adversaries,
and let the nations tremble before you!
When you did awesome things
that we could not have expected,
you came down,
and the mountains quaked in your presence!
From ages past no ear has ever heard,
no eye has seen any God besides you
intervening for those who wait for you!
Oh, that You would find us doing right,
that we would be mindful of you in our ways!
You are angry because we are sinful;
we sinned for so long – how can we be saved?
All of us have become unclean and soiled,
even our good deeds are polluted.
We have all withered like leaves,
and our guilt carries us away like the wind.
No one calls upon your Name,
there is none who clings to you,
for you hid your face from us
and delivered us into the hands of our sins.
Yet you are our mother and father, YHWY;
we are the clay, and you are the potter;
we are all the work of your hands.
Do not let your anger go beyond measure, O God.
Do not remember our sins forever,
for we are all your people.

This Sunday's Readings—continued

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Paul's words to a struggling community are intended to instill hope in a time of waiting. Perhaps, written in light of Paul's image of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12), Paul is reminding the church at Corinth that when they operate as an integrated and interdependent body, unified and vision-inspired, they have everything they need. God is generous with revelation and is working through the many gifts of community to bring forth something of beauty that will give light to the world.

It is written . . .

Grace and peace from our Loving God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

I continually thank my God for you because of the gift bestowed on you in Christ Jesus, in whom you have been richly endowed with every gift of speech and knowledge. In the same way, the testimony about Christ has been so confirmed among you that you lack no spiritual gift, as you wait for the revelation of our Savior Jesus Christ. God will strengthen you to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Savior Jesus Christ. God, through whom you have been called into intimacy with Jesus our Savior, is faithful.

Mark 13:24-37

Mark's mini-apocalypse describes both terror and fulfillment. Nature will be transformed prior to the coming of God's Promised One. Many of us can identify with such apocalyptic thinking, although we view it in naturalistic rather supernatural terms. Our planet is in trouble: we see signs of destruction, of dying species and collapsing glaciers, and fear a random collision with a meteor that will alter our planet forever and put an end to the human enterprise. We need to observe the signs of the times and act accordingly. No one knows the hour or day. What is needed is wakefulness and self-awareness.

It is written . . .

[Jesus said:]

"But in those days, after that time of distress,
the sun will be darkened,
the moon will lose its brightness,
the stars will fall from the sky,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

Then they will see the Promised One coming in clouds with great power and glory. Then the angels will be sent to gather the chosen from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

"Take the fig tree as a parable: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. In the same way, when you see these things happening, you know that the Promised One is near, right at the door. The truth is, before this generation has passed away, all these things will have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

"But as for that day or hour, nobody knows it - neither the angels of heaven, nor the Only Begotten - no one but Abba God. Be constantly on the watch! Stay awake! You do not know when the appointed time will come.

It is like people traveling on a journey. They leave their home and put the workers in charge, each with a certain task, and those who watch at the front gate are ordered to stay on the alert. So stay alert! You do not know when the owner of the house is coming, whether at dusk, at midnight, when the cock crows or at early dawn. Do not let the owner come suddenly and catch you asleep. What I say to you I say to all: Stay alert!"



Interfaith Service for **WORLD AIDS DAY**

STOP AIDS. KEEP THE PROMISE. ACT AWARE.

Wednesday, Nov. 30, 2011 at 7:00 pm



Sponsored by the San Francisco Interfaith Council, the Interfaith Center at the Presidio, and host congregation St. Mark's Lutheran Church

This Unique Service will include:

Remembrance of those who have died.

Honoring those who organized, served and contributed.

Time for centering in compassion and the values of faith traditions.

Focus on where HIV/AIDS is today as opportunities for people of faith.

An opportunity will be provided for representatives of Community based AIDS Organizations and Faith Based Organizations serving individuals with HIV/AIDS to be recognized and thanked.

Please join us.



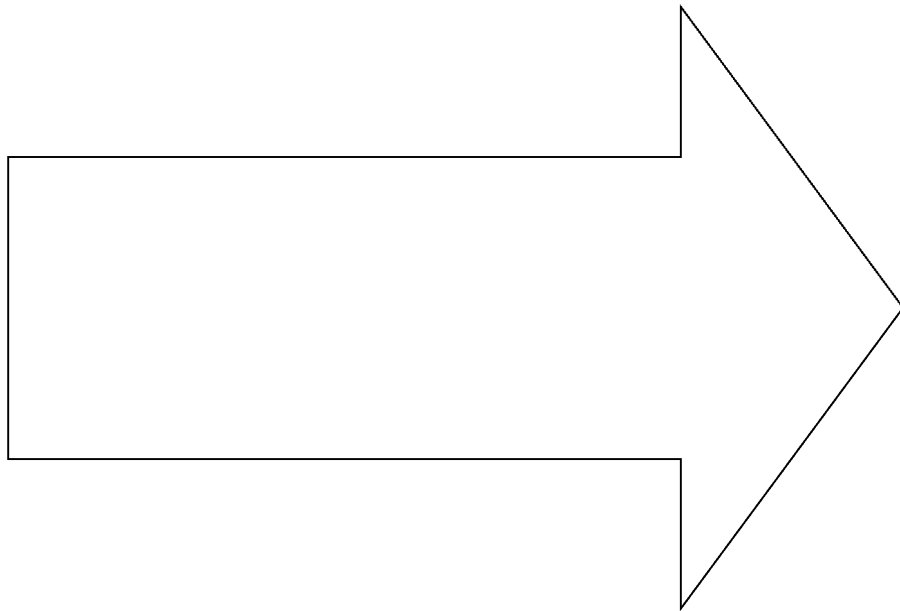
1111 O'Farrell St. | SF | 415.928.7770 | www.stmarks-sf.org

Parking Available off Gough St.



This page is blank.

Nothin' to see here—
keep movin' along.





Prayer is not asking. It is a longing of the soul. It is daily admission of one's weakness. It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without a heart.—Mahatma Gandhi

WORLD AIDS DAY

Interfaith World AIDS Day Service

WHEN: Wednesday, November 30, 2011, 7:00 pm

WHERE: St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 1111 O'Farrell Street, San Francisco. Free event.

“Remember – Still – Here”

Sponsored by: The Interfaith Center at the Presidio, The San Francisco Interfaith Council, St. Mark's Lutheran Church

MULTIFAITH RELIGIOUS & CULTURAL OBSERVANCES



November

- 26 Day of Covenant * - **Baha'i**
Hijra - New Year * ** - **Islam**
- 27 First Sunday of Advent - **Christian**
- 30 Saint Andrew's Day - **Christian**

December

- 5 Ashura * ** - **Islam**
- 6 Saint Nicholas Day - **Christian**
- 8 Bodhi Day (Rohatsu) ** - **Buddhism**
Immaculate Conception - **Catholic Christian**
- 12 Feast day - Our Lady of Guadalupe - **Catholic Christian**
- 16 Posadas Navidenas through Dec. 25 - **Christian**
- 21-28 Hanukkah * - **Jewish**
- 22 solstice
Yule - **Christian**
Yule * - **Wicca/Pagan** northern hemisphere
Litha * - **Wicca/Pagan** southern hemisphere
- 24 Christmas Eve - **Christian**
- 25 **Christmas * - Christian**
Feast of the Nativity - **Orthodox Christian**
- 26 Zarathosht Diso (Death of Prophet Zarathushtra) ** - **Zoroastrian**
Saint Stephen, Deacon and Martyr - **Christian**
- 28 Holy Innocents - **Christian**
- 30 Feast of the Holy Family - **Catholic Christian**
- 31 Watch Night - **Christian**

Note: 1. * Holy days usually begin at sundown the day before this date.
2. ** Local or regional customs may use a variation of this date.
Bold titles are primary holy days of a tradition.



Coming Events:

☞ FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

*Sunday, November 27
Worship at 5:00 pm
in the Chapel*



☞ THEOLOGY & COFFEE DISCUSSION GROUP

*Tuesday, November 29, 7:00 pm
Peet's Coffee, 601 Van Ness Avenue at Turk*

☞ INTERFAITH WORLD AIDS DAY WORSHIP

*Wednesday, November 30, 7:30 pm
St. Mark's Lutheran Church
(World AIDS Day is on December 1.)*

☞ CONFIRMATION OF STEPHANIE BARROW SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

*Sunday, December 4
Worship at 5:00 pm in the
Chapel*



☞ CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING

*Tuesday, December 6, 7:30 pm
Medical Office at 450 Sutter*

Sunday Worship

5:00 p.m. at

First Unitarian Universalist Chapel
1187 Franklin St.

Office Hours & Mailing Address

1537 Franklin St., Suite 201
San Francisco, CA 94109
M- F 7:30-11:30 a.m.
(415) 359-1025 (V)
(415) 359-1267 (F)

For information visit our website:
www.fulc.com
email: info@fulc.com

Pastor Susan Strouse

Office Hours:
Tuesday & Thursday
(510) 528-4354(H)
(510) 579-7061 (C)
email: PastorSusan@fulc.com

Orion Pitts

Music Director & Office Administrator
orion@fulc.com

2010-2011 Council:

Jacob Johnson	President@fulc.com
Steve Johnson	Treasurer@fulc.com
Terri Bogaards	Secretary@fulc.com
Tamara Alliston	Dana McDonald
	Pamela Hargraves

NOTE:

Deadline for submission
of all information or items in
Keeping in Touch is

Wednesday at 12 noon

of the week of publication. Items sub-
mitted after this time may not be in-
cluded in that week's edition.



*For details on all First United
events, go to www.fulc.com
& click on "Calendar".*

Policy for Charitable Donations

First United's policy is to help people
by finding services when possible.
All requests for help must go to Pas-
tor Susan. Please do not ask mem-
bers for money, rides, phone use, or
food—ask only Pastor Susan.



Nov. 25:
Deborah Hagemann

Nov. 26:
Elizabeth Christie

Nov. 30:
Amanda Nelson

Dec. 2:
Marci Rohrer

THIS WEEK'S WORSHIP LEADERS

Pr. Susan Strouse	Pr. Susan Strouse
Terri Bogaards	Terri Bogaards
TBA	TBA
Pam & Marilyn	Pam & Marilyn
Pam & Marilyn	Pam & Marilyn

WORSHIP LEADERS FOR DECEMBER 4

Pr. Susan Strouse	Pr. Susan Strouse
Jacob Johnson	Jacob Johnson
Jay Beatty	Jay Beatty
Jacob & Tamara	Jacob & Tamara
Jacob & Tamara	Jacob & Tamara

To sign up as a Greeter or other worship assis-
tant, send an email to info@fulc.com.