

**December 24: 4th Sunday of Advent: Here Am I**

**Single Worship Service, \*10AM**

The Advent wreath will be brightly lit as we celebrate the season of Hope, Peace, Joy & Love. This morning, we will Wait in Hope as we remember Mary's call and her courageous answer, "Here Am I!" *NOTE: There will be no Sunday school but the nursery will be available.*

**All-Ages Worship & Christmas Pageant, 3:30 & \*5PM**

The children and youth of our church will lead our all-ages, kid-friendly, and joy-forward early services. The All-In band will lead the congregation in singing our favorite carols, and a Christmas Pageant entitled "Don't Freak Out!" will whimsically retell the story of Christ's birth. If you are interested in helping with this ministry, please sign up at [www.tinyurl.com/CongoPageant23](http://www.tinyurl.com/CongoPageant23).



**Traditional Christmas Eve Worship service, \*8:30 & 10PM: Hope Arrives!**

A timeless experience with the Chancel Choir and brass ensemble, this traditional service reminds us of the enduring message of hope, love, and salvation that Christmas represents. The deep traditions of faith resonate, encapsulating the essence of the holiday season.



**December 25: Christmas Day**

**Poinsettias Ministry in the Sanctuary, 11AM**

A heartwarming and thoughtful initiative where volunteers personally deliver poinsettia plants to the homes or care facilities of individuals who need some extra Christmas Cheer. The visits are a time for conversation, connection, and sharing the joy of the season. If you're interested in this ministry, please email Meredith at [meredith@wscongo.org](mailto:meredith@wscongo.org).



**December 31: Sunday After Christmas**

**\*10AM Worship in the Sanctuary**

*There is no Sunday school but the nursery is available.*

*\*These services will be live-streamed on The First Congregational Church of Western Springs YouTube channel @fccwesternsprings.*

**CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS**

If you'd like to purchase a Christmas poinsettia used to decorate the altar for our Christmas Eve worship services, please scan the QR code or visit [wscongo.org/give](http://wscongo.org/give) to place your order. Each plant is \$17 and the orders are due by December 11.



**ADVENT "PAUSE AND REFLECT" PRAYERS**

With the excitement, anticipation, and "busyness" of Christmas, it can be easy to overlook Advent, the season of preparation for the soul. Christmas can also be a difficult time of year that holds wearying emotions and feelings of loneliness or sadness. Wherever we find ourselves in this spectrum, God is with us. Take time each day to pause, reflect, pray, and listen to God's voice by visiting our Advent page at [wscongo.org/Advent](http://wscongo.org/Advent) to access daily Advent prayers.



**THANK YOU**

*A heartfelt thank you for considering The First Congregational Church of Western Springs as a part of your Advent journey.*



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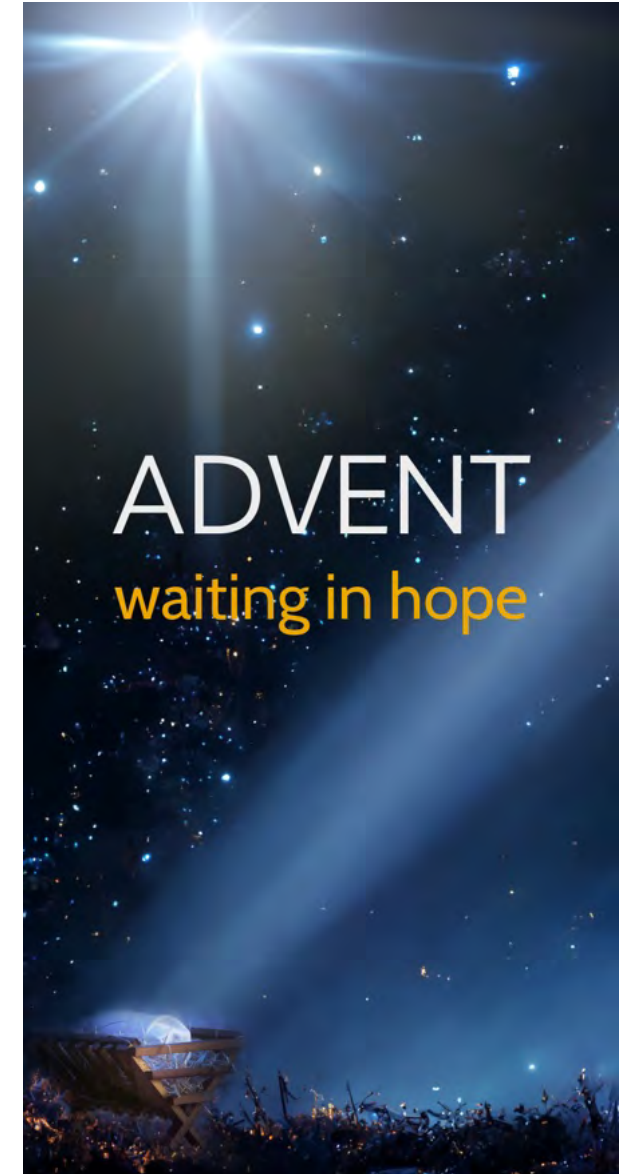


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Scan below for more info on the season of Advent



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*Advent is a season of waiting. We wait expectantly for the Christ Child to come again. In our chaotic world and lives, we lament our condition and long for God to set things right, to make us better. We pray and watch for signs of God's presence. We wait, trusting something wonderful is about to happen.*

*Advent is a season of preparation; we prepare in joyful anticipation for the Christ child to be born anew in our world and in our hearts. We do all we can to prepare so we are open and ready. We make space for God. We believe something is happening in our world, something is taking shape in our lives, something large, light-filled, and life-giving. Even in December's lengthening darkness, this seed of joyful hope grows within us.*

Let us Wait in Hope together!



**December 3: 1st Sunday of Advent:  
Beware, Keep Alert**

8:45 & \*10AM Worship

The phrase "Beware, Keep Alert" serves as a gentle but urgent reminder, encouraging us to stay awake and be vigilant, not only in waiting for Christ's return, but also in our daily lives.

We will participate in the Sacrament of Communion, lighting the candle of Hope at both services. At our 8:45 service, we'll sing simple songs and let the kids take on the "jobs" usually held by grownups, and Jeff Kust (guitar) and Lauren Reynolds (vocalist) will provide beautiful music. At the 10AM service, we will listen as the Chancel Choir performs music by Chicago composers Richard Proulx and Carl Schalk.

Advent Wreath-Making, 9-12PM in Plymouth Hall \$25/per wreath

Kick off the season by making an Advent wreath to observe the traditions of Advent at home. Wreath-making will be available after both services. Treats will be served. Please be sure to register for this popular event on our website or by using the QR code.



**December 7 at 12:30PM: Woman's Society  
General Meeting at Plymouth Place**

Gather with friends, enjoy a cookie, and listen to Blue Lexi, featuring our very own First Congo friends Stephanie King-Myers, Dan Harps, and Jeff Kust. Familiar tunes and the band's live performance will fill the air with warmth and nostalgia.



**December 10: 2nd Sunday of Advent:  
A Messenger Brings Good News**

8:45 & \*10AM Worship

We come together in worship where we relight the candle of Hope and light our second candle representing Peace. As we Wait in Hope, we hear the prophet Isaiah proclaim the beginning of the good news of Jesus' arrival with John the Baptist paving the way. Our Chancel Choir will sing music both in English and Spanish.

Gifts of Hope Alternative Market, 9:30-12:30PM in Plymouth Hall

This wonderful alternative market supports our local, urban, and global mission partners with more than 20 not-for-profit "merchants" selling "gifts" (supplies and services) to support their specific cause. Donations will be matched dollar for dollar, up to \$9,000, through the Ruth Koch Memorial Fund.

PF - San Lucas UCC Christmas Lunch, 1-3:30PM

Join Plymouth Fellowship as they host a lunch for the people of Humboldt Park experiencing homelessness and hunger this Advent season! Contact Mike Tilden at [Tilden@wscongo.org](mailto:Tilden@wscongo.org) for details or to sign up.

Words & Music, 5PM in Plymouth Hall

This year the All in Band will perform grown up Christmas songs and feature stories about the season! All are welcome!



**December 13, 7PM: Taizé service in the Chapel**

Take a break from the frenetic pace of the season and join us for a quiet service of scripture, song, candlelight and prayer.



**December 15, 12-5PM: Red Cross Blood Drive in  
Plymouth Hall**

Give a gift that will save a life! Visit [RedCrossBlood.org](http://RedCrossBlood.org) or call 1-800-RED-CROSS for an appointment. Contact Faith Community Nurse Jean Larson MSN, RN at [jean@wscongo.org](mailto:jean@wscongo.org) with questions.



**December 16, 2-10PM: "Crammin' at Congo" in  
Plymouth Hall**

Quiet spaces will be set aside for study and peer tutoring for high school finals. Snacks and drinks will be available as well as occasional study breaks that may include 15 minutes of yoga or meditation/relaxation activities. Open to anyone getting ready for final exams!

**December 17: 3rd Sunday of Advent:  
Anticipating the Light**

8:45 & \*10AM Worship

*Waiting in Hope: Anticipating the Light* is a worship experience that captures the essence of the Advent season. Together, we will anticipate the joy that comes with the arrival of Christ's light. May we all be inspired to carry this message of hopeful anticipation to the shadowy places in our world. Our amazing bell choirs will be featured.

Annual PF Christmas Party, 3-5PM  
The high school youth group has its annual Christmas party!

Live Nativity on the Front Lawn,  
3:30PM & Carols & Candles at 4PM

Our live nativity tradition continues starting at 3:30PM and — yes! — you will be able to pet the animals. At 4PM, we'll sing Christmas carols accompanied by a brass ensemble and a volunteer wind band. Email Ray Klemchuk at [ray@wscongo.org](mailto:ray@wscongo.org) if you'd like to be a part of the instrumental ensemble on any wind instrument. The Holy Family, including Baby Jesus, are expected to arrive at 5PM. Hot cocoa will be available to keep us warm and toasty! Invite a friend or neighbor to this celebration — the whole community can come celebrate the true spirit of Christmas!



**December 21, 6:30-9PM: Longest Night  
Labyrinth Walk with Harpist in Plymouth Hall**

This unique, contemplative event takes place during the winter solstice, the longest night of the year, offering participants a serene, meditative experience as they walk the labyrinth illuminated by the soft glow of candlelight, accompanied by the soothing melodies of a harp.