



Wentz's United Church of Christ

3246 Skippack Pike Lansdale, PA 19446 610.584.4855

Wednesday, December 21, 2022 7:00pm
Longest Night



Gathering Music

Call to Worship

Pastor: Tonight, we gather here in this place of refuge,

People: for we are lost, we are lonely, we are afraid.

Pastor: Tonight, we gather daring to wonder if God has indeed come in Jesus,

People: discerning the rejection we have known, intimate with our failed relationships, holding our heartache in hands of tenderness.

Pastor: Tonight, we gather with neighbors and strangers, a family made one by our brokenness,

People: coming with our hearts full of hope, and our pockets filled with doubts.

Pastor: Tonight, we gather just as we are,

People: for God has promised to meet us here and to welcome us for who we are.

The Lighting of the Christ Candle

Hymn “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” Blue Hymnal 88

Opening Prayer

Holy God of Advent: you became weak so we could find strength in moments of heartbreak; you left the safety of heaven to wander the wilderness of the world, holding our hands when we feel so hopeless; you set aside your glory to hold our pain so we might be healed, even when there seems to be no hope; you became one of us, so we could never be alone in any moment, in any circumstance.

So come now, Child of Bethlehem, to strengthen us in these days. May we feel your presence in a way we have never known, not just as One born in a stable long ago and far away, but as One born in our hearts, in our hopes, in our spirits, in our weakness.

You have promised to go before us: into our brokenness, into hospital rooms, into empty houses, into graveyards, into our future held by our God, and you are here, even now, waiting for each of us: to serve us, to hold us, to comfort us, to live in us, now and forever. Amen.

STORIES OF COMFORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Reader

Reflection

Rita Cipriano

Ezekiel 18:19

Kathy Wells

Psalms 121

Donna Mower

Matthew 11:28-29; Galatians 6:2

AFFIRMING GOD’S PRESENCE WITH US

Litany of Release

Pastor: All around us are the sights and sounds of Christmas, Gentle God: the laughter of parties, the songs of carolers, the shouts of children sledding down hills, the music in every store. But deep within us we carry our pain, our grief walks with us every step we take, loneliness is a shawl we drape over our shoulders on empty nights.

People: So, in this time when every night stretches into eternity, we come to you, bringing our gifts: not gold, frankincense and myrrh, but the grief that is the empty space in the closet filled with memories, the loss that is a sore which never heals, the bitterness that tastes like two-day old coffee.

Pastor: We have come from different backgrounds, from different families, from other faith traditions. But we have all lived in the far country of despair, wandered the land of shame, built our lives in those neighborhoods peopled by empty dreams.

People: We have stood on the side of every room we have gone into, hoping against hope that someone would ask us to dance, but find the wall is our only friend.

Pastor: In a season when so many people don't have enough hours in a day to get their lists checked off, their cards mailed, their presents wrapped, we have all the time in the world:

People: to remember the loss that has stolen the joy of the season; to grieve over a job, a dream, a loved one we have lost; to sit in the shadows of our homes, too weary to turn on the lights; to wander the streets lit by decorations on all the houses, but not by the Light of the world.

Pastor: Our fear of the future, our remembrance of the past; our pain which is difficult to bear and harder to release; our emptiness which cannot be filled with platitudes; our hands which cannot hold the ones we wish to embrace: all make this a season of long nights.

People: So, be with us in our loneliness, in our longing, in our loss, in our lives.

All: In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.

Solo

Charley Kinsky

SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION AND CANDLELIGHTING

Invitation to Commune

Communion Prayer

One: God be with you.

All: And also with you.

One: Lift up your hearts;

All: We lift them up to God.

One: Let us give thanks to God Most High:

All: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Breaking Bread, Pouring Wine

Prayer of Consecration and the 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 sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, and deliver us from evil, for the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Call to the Supper, Sharing the Elements

Our celebration of Holy Communion is for all who wish to know the presence of Christ and share in the community of God's people. Please come forward to receive the bread (not gluten free) and wine (grape juice is in the center ring).

All are also invited to approach the altar at this time to light a candle from the Christ Candle in memory of someone, something, or as a sign of hope. After lighting your candle, you are invited to take a polished stone from the tray on the altar. On the days ahead when you feel pain, loneliness, grief, or anger, may you hold this stone and remember the love, strength, courage, and peace you received this night in God's presence.

Hymn "Amazing Grace" Red Hymnal 107

Prayer of Thanksgiving

We give you thanks, O God, because in your own free gift of love you have reached out to us. You have refreshed us at your table, touched our deepest needs, and called us to a life shared in memory and hope. Send us forth with courage and joy in the name of Jesus Christ, that we, too, may become bread and peace for one another and the world. Amen.

DEPARTING WITH GOD'S BLESSING

Benediction

Time of Silence

You are welcome to remain in the sanctuary to pray or sit peacefully as long as you wish.

When you are ready, please depart in silence.



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Rev. Dr. James L. Mills, Sr. – Senior Pastor
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Ruth Geisel – Consistory President/Elder
Mike Todd- Ministerial Intern/Administrative Assistant
Corey Taragna- Lead Trustee
Donna Mower – Guild President
June Wright- Organist
Laura McLennan and Jim O'Donnell- Music Dept
Matt MacDonald- social media