

FRIENDS CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



Longest Night Service
December 18, 2024
6:30pm

*An Open & Affirming
Congregation*

The Longest Night: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Matthew 5:4). For those who have experienced loss, the holidays can be a particularly painful time, stirring up grief in acute ways. As a result, churches around the world have adopted the practice of having a “Blue Christmas” or a “Longest Night” service during the Advent season. In the Northern hemisphere, this service is often observed on December 21st, the Winter Solstice, which is the longest night of the year. However, this service can be held at any time throughout the Advent or Christmas season. A Longest Night service is designed to provide space for prayer, reflection, and remembrance amidst the holiday hustle and bustle.

WORDS OF WELCOME & OPENING POEM BY REV. SARAH SPEED Dan De Leon

OPENING HYMN: No. 128 - In the Bleak Midwinter *Cranham*

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION Brooke Dooley

HEBREW SCRIPTURE READING: Isaiah 40:1-11, NRSV Abigail Moody

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

A voice cries out: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” A voice says, “Cry out!” And I said, “What shall I cry?” All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

HEBREW SCRIPTURE READING: Lamentations 3:21-24, NRSV Emily Rakov

But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him."

GOSPEL READING: John 14:27-28, NRSV Linda Fitzwater

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I.

HEBREW SCRIPTURE READING: Psalm 121, NRSV Caleb Klemt

I lift up my eyes to the hills— from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.
He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.
The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.
The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.
The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:

After each stanza of prayer, all are invited to sing the refrain of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

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;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

INDIVIDUAL PRAYER

Brooke Dooley

INSTRUCTIONS FOR LIGHTING CANDLES TO SHARE OUR PRAYERS

Brooke Dooley

CANDLE LIGHTING

At this time, you are invited to come forward to light candles in honor of your prayers.

COMMUNAL SENDING (RESPONSIVE)

Dan De Leon

One: We are here.

All: We are here.

One: I see you and your pain.

All: I see you and your pain.

One: I see you and your hope.

All: I see you and your hope.

One: You are my neighbor.

All: You are my neighbor.

One: We belong to one another.

All: We belong to one another.

One: We are not in this alone.

All: We are not in this alone.

One: Thanks be to God for the love that binds us.

All: Thanks be to God for the love that binds us.

One: Amen.

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

Dan De Leon

*CLOSING HYMN: No. 121 Toda La Tierra (All Earth Is Waiting)

Taule

*BENEDICTION

Brooke Dooley

POSTLUDE

NOTE OF GRATITUDE: The greeter helping with tonight's service is Carolyn Young.

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