



**CENTERPORT UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
centerportumc.org  
**BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE**  
**DECEMBER 21, 2020**

***A Service of Remembrance and Hope***

*“Comfort, comfort my people,” says your God - Isaiah 40*

**PRAYER FOR MEDITATION**

*“The Spirit is Breathing.”*

Dom Helder Camera, *Its Midnight, Lord*

*All those with eyes to see,  
women and men with ears for hearing  
detect a coming dawn;  
a reason to go on.*

*They seem small, these signs of dawn  
perhaps ridiculous.*

*All those with eyes to see,  
women and men with ears for hearing  
uncover in the night  
a certain gleam of light;  
they see the reason to go on.*

**WORDS OF WELCOME AND BREATH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

**OPENING PRAYER**

How do we say love? For our hearts are bound by the memories we know. God first loved us, and drew us to himself that we might know love and come alive, and so we come again to find the heart of God. We gather to praise God for the gift of life, and do not know what to say, and so we sing. We gather remembering the loss of our loved ones, and do not know what to say, and so we sing. We gather in joy for the gift of love, and do not know what to say, and so we sing. God of the loving heart is always ready to have our hearts mended, filled, and opened again to the wonder of life – and so we sing.

**HYMN # 626 (v. 1-3)**

*“Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence”*

United Methodist Hymnal

Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and with fear and trembling stand;  
Ponder nothing earthly-minded, for with blessing in his hand,  
Christ our God to earth descendeth, our full homage to demand.

King of kings, yet born of Mary, as of old on earth he stood,  
Lord of lords, in human vesture, in the body and the blood;  
He will give to all the faithful, his own self for heavenly food.

Rank on rank the host of heaven, spreads its vanguard on the way,  
As the Light of light descendeth, from the realms of endless day,  
That the powers of hell may vanish, as the darkness clears away.

**LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLES**

This is the time of endings and beginnings when the small signs of dawn pierce through the night and something new is born. As the darkness clears away with each candle set aflame: (*a candle is lit as each is said.*) Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. These are God’s gifts, even as we wait for dawn.

Let us prepare ourselves for the God-child to be born anew in our time, in our life, in our present moment; even while we remember his coming once upon a time to a young woman, her husband and the world long ago.

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 22:1-5

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest. Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. To you they cried, and were saved; in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.

HYMN # 230 (vs. 1 & 3)

*"O Little Town of Bethlehem"*

United Methodist Hymnal

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie;  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep, the silent stars go by.  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth, the everlasting light;  
The hopes and fears of all the years, are met in thee tonight.

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given;  
So God imparts to human hearts, the blessings of his heaven.  
No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive him, still, the dear Christ enters in.

SCRIPTURE READING

Isaiah 40

(selected verses)

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." Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

MUSICAL MEDITATION

*"Where Are You Christmas"*

Faith Hill

Christine Jordan, soloist

Where are you Christmas, why can't I find you, why have you gone away  
Where is the laughter, you used to bring me, why can't I hear music play  
My world is changing, I'm rearranging, does that mean Christmas changes too

Where are you Christmas, do you remember, the one you used to know  
I'm not the same one, see what the time's done, is that why you have let me go

Christmas is here, everywhere, Christmas is here, if you care  
If there is love in your heart and your mind, you will feel like Christmas all the time

I feel you Christmas, I know I've found you, you never fade away,  
The joy of Christmas, stays here inside us, fills each and every heart with love  
Where are you Christmas, fill your heart with love

GOSPEL READING

Matthew 11:28-29

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE

We light this first candle to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember clearly, their faces, their voices, their bodies. We embrace and give thanks for the memories that bind them to us in this season of expectation, when all Creation waits for the Light. We remember them with love. May God's eternal love surround them.

HYMN # 211 (v 1)

*“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”*

United Methodist Hymnal

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,  
that mourns in lonely exile here, until the son of God appear,  
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

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We light this second candle to remember the pain of loss: loss of relationships, loss of trust, loss of jobs, loss of health, loss of faith, the loss of joy. We acknowledge and embrace the pain of the past, O God, and we offer it to You, asking that into our wounded hearts and open hands You will place the gift of peace, shalom. We remember that through You all things are possible. Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into Your future.

HYMN # 211 (v 2)

*“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”*

United Methodist Hymnal

O come thou Wisdom from on high, who orderest all things mightily,  
to us the path of knowledge show, and teach us in her ways to go,  
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

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We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and for some of us years, that have been heavy with burdens. We accept and lay before you, God, the sharpness of memory, the sadness and grief, the hurt and fear, the anger and pain. We accept and lay before you the ways we have fallen short, and the times we have spent blaming ourselves, and you, for all that we have suffered. We accept and lay before you the time we have walked alone, in darkness, and in knowledge of our own mortality. We remember that though we have journeyed far, and that, while lost, we may have turned from the light, the light itself has not failed. We remember that though winter is upon us, and the night is dark, the dawn will come, and dawn defeats the darkness.

HYMN # 211 (v 5)

*“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”*

United Methodist Hymnal

O come thou dayspring, come and cheer, our spirits by thy advent here,  
disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight;  
Rejoice, rejoice Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

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We light this fourth candle to remember faith, the gift of light and hope that God offers to us in the stories of Christmas, which both also began in abandonment, insecurity, and humbleness, in a time of war and in a poor stable. We remember that the loving God who kept the light shining in the temple and who came to share this life with us

promises us comfort and peace. We remember the One who shares our burdens, who shows us the way to the Light, and who journeys with us into all our tomorrows.

HYMN # 211 (v 6)

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

United Methodist Hymnal

O come desire of nations bind, in one the hearts of all mankind, bid then our sad, divisions cease,  
and be thyself our King of Peace; Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

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#### LITANY OF PRAYER

God of wisdom, we come to you this Christmas Season tired, in turmoil, and in pain. As the nights have grown longer, so has darkness grown and wrapped itself around our hearts. In this season of longest night, we ask your healing blessings upon all that we carry in our hearts -- sorrow we fear may never end, wounds we cannot even put into words. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

God of mercy and compassion, there are those among us who are grieving over what might have been. Death or loss or terrible hurt has changed our experience of Christmas. We remember that once it was a special day for us, too, but someone or something precious has gone away from us in this life. We have lost a beloved, a job, a goal, a cause, a dream. We find ourselves adrift and alone. We are weary from the journey, and we have found no room at the inn. We come to you seeking rest, and peace, and shelter from the storm. Lord, hear our prayer. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

God of grace, in the spirit of the season, grant us all that we need to comfort us as we journey through this Christmas season. We ask that you shelter and sustain all those of us, both here and throughout the world, who wander or want or weep or are heavy laden, that we may be lifted up in courage and journey on in Thy peace. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

God of love, in this Christmas Season we embrace and offer up to you all that used to be which is now lost to us, and cannot be again. With celebration all around us, memories of what was, and fears of what may be, weigh heavy on our hearts. Please hold us close in your embrace, be near to us this night, until the light returns and morning comes. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give thine angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for thy love's sake. Amen.

LIGHTING OUR CANDLES (*You are invited to light a candle shining Hope into the darkness of this Season*)

HYMN # 239 (v. 1, 3-4)

“Silent Night, Holy Night”

United Methodist Hymnal

Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright, round yon virgin, mother and child.  
Holy infant, so tender and mild, sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light;  
Radiant beams from thy holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

Silent night, holy night, wondrous star, lend thy light; with the angels let us sing, Alleluia to our King;  
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!

#### CLOSING PRAYER