



**7 p.m.**

**December 21, 2020**

**First United Methodist Church**

Centering Music

Stan Haemmelmann

Welcome

Rev. Craig Collins

Call to Worship

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by God, and without God nothing came to be. What came to be through God was life, and this life was the light of the world.

**The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.**

The First Reading: Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

Rev. Sheryl Kester Beyer

Psalm 22

Rev. Chris Kester Beyer

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from helping me, so far 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.**

In you, our ancestors trusted. They trusted and you delivered them.

**It was you who brought me from the womb,  
you who kept me safe on my mother's breast.**

**Since my mother bore me, you have been my God.**

Do not be far from me,

for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

**God does not despise the affliction of the afflicted.**

**God does not hide from me. When I cry to God, God hears me. Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 23

Father Mark Selvey

**The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.**

**He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;**

**he leadeth me beside the still waters.**

**He restoreth my soul;**

**he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness  
for his Name's sake.**

**Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,**

**I will fear no evil; for thou art with me;**

**Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.**

**Thou preparest a table before me**

**in the presence of mine enemies;**

**thou annointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.**

**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me**

**all the days of my life,**

**and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.**

The Second Reading:

Select verses from Isaiah 40

Rev. Nona Hodder

Litany of Remembrance

*Rev. Joseph Schumacher lights the first candle and leads the response.*

*Rev. Sheryl Kester Beyer:*

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 "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (vs. 1)

UMH #211

**O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
and ransom captive Israel  
That mourn in lonely exile here,  
until the Son of God appear**

**Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

*Rev. Joseph Schumacher lights the second candle and leads the response.*

*Rev. Chris Kester Beyer*

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.**

**O come, thou Wisdom from on high,  
and order all things far and nigh  
To us the path of knowledge show,  
and cause us in her ways to go  
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

*Rev. Joseph Schumacher lights the third candle and leads the response.*

*Fr. Mark Selvey :*

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 our burdens. We accept and lay before you, God, the sharpness of memory, the sadness of our grief, the hurt and fear, the anger and pain. We accept and lay before you the ways we feel 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 away from the light, the light itself has not failed. We remember that though winter be upon us and though the night be dark, with the turning of the Wheel the dawn will come, and dawn defeats the darkness.**

**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.**

*Rev. Joseph Schumacher lights the fourth candle and leads the response.*

*Rev. Nona Hodder:*

We light this fourth candle to remember faith, the gift of light and hope that God offers to us in the message of Christmas, which began in the humbleness of a poor stable. We remember that the loving God 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.**

**O come desire of nations bind  
all peoples in one heart and mind.  
Bid then our sad, divisions cease,  
and be thyself our King of Peace  
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

Special Music "In the Bleak Mid-Winter"

Gustav Holst, 1906; Arr. David Archuletta, 2018

Soloist: Dr. Patrick Newell

## The Prayers of the People

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, 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. And all God's people said: **Amen.**

Third Reading: Luke 2:1-7

Rev. April Fiet

Hymn

“Away in the Manger”

**Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,  
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.  
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,  
the little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.  
The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,  
but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.  
I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky  
and stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.  
Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay  
close by me forever, and love me, I pray.  
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,  
and fit us for heaven to live with thee there.**

*Rev. Jeff Fiet:*

You are invited to share as we light the votive candles which represents your burdens, griefs, sorrows, all those things that make Christmas a “blue” time for you. You may speak the name of the event if you wish to do so. Those of you on Zoom, you are invited to unmute your mic when you are ready to share. Those on the livestream are invited to message us with your responses.

In the center of this table, we light the Christ candle, remembering that Jesus Christ is always in the center of our lives. He hears our cries, he knows our hearts and, in the midst of all our thoughts and emotions, he offers us hope and healing.

Lighting of the Christ Candle

Unison Prayer

**Comforting God, we thank you for your constant love and for the blessings of this day. We know that even when we cannot see or feel you, still you are there. Help us to remember you and to listen for your voice in the words of family, friends, and strangers. Kindle our hearts and awaken hope, that we may know you as you reveal yourself in the world and in our lives. Let the light of your Holy Spirit shine like these candles in the darkness, lighting the way for all who feel despairing, lost, or forgotten, and grant that it may come to dwell in our hearts that when we leave this place it may shine on, for us and for those we meet along the way. Amen.**

**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!  
 Shepherds quake at the sight.  
 Glories stream from heaven afar,  
 heavenly hosts sing: "Alleluia!"  
 Christ the Savior is born! Christ the Savior is born!"**

**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."**

#### Blessing and Dismissal

Go in peace, knowing that the God whose love created this world sent Jesus into the same world to be our friend, companion and Savior. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out.

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#### Centering Music:

God Himself is With Us	Joachim Neander, Arr. Roger C. Wilson 1967
Meditations on "In the Bleak Midwinter"	Lawrence A. James 2008
Twas in the Moon of Wintertime	French Folk Tune Arr. Robert J. Powell 2008
I Wonder as I Wander	John Jacob Niles, Arr. Fred Bock 1961
While Shepherds Watched Their Flock	Arr. Anna Laura Page 2012

#### Special Music:

In the Bleak Mid-Winter	Gustav Holst, 1906; Arr. David Archuletta, 2018
	Soloist: Dr. Patrick Newell

#### Postlude:

O Little Town of Bethlehem	Arr. Robert Lau 2012
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Special thanks to those who helped with our service this evening:

Readers:

Reverend Craig Collins

First United Methodist Church

Fr. Mark Selvey, St. Francis Episcopal Church

Reverend Nona Hodder, First Christian Church

Reverends Chris and Sheryl Kester Beyer,

Calvary Lutheran Church &

Holy Apostles' Episcopal Church

Reverends Jeff and April Fiet,

First Presbyterian Church

Reverend Joseph Schumacher,

Henry/Lyman United Methodist

Mitchell United Methodist

Morrill First United Methodist

Music:

Stan Haemmelmann, organ

Dr. Patrick Newell, vocalist

Video Tech: Jay Grote

Audio Tech: Blake Wohlers

The 'Blue Christmas' service used tonight is based in part on an order developed and used at The Cathedral Church of Saint Andrew, Honolulu, Hawaii