

*Mulberry Street United Methodist Church  
Macon, Georgia*

# *Service of the Longest Night*

*December 20, 2015  
Five O'clock in the Evening*



*The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
on those who lived in a land of deep darkness  
a light has shone.*

*For the yoke that was weighing upon them,  
and the burden upon their shoulders,  
you have broken in pieces O God,  
our Redeemer.*

*(from Isaiah 9)*

*Prelude*

*Words of Welcome*

*Rev. Tommy Perkins*

*Call to Worship*

*Jesus said, "Come unto me all you who labor  
and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."  
And so we invite each other to this time of peaceful worship.  
Flee for a while from your tasks;  
Hide yourself for a little space from  
the turmoil of your thoughts.  
Come, cast aside your burdensome cares  
and put aside your laborious pursuits.  
Give your time to God, and rest in God for a little while.*

*\* Hymn No. 211*

*"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"*

*VENI EMMANUEL*

*(stanzas 1, 2, 6 and 7)*

*A Liturgy of Remembering and Lighting of the Advent Wreath*

*This first candle we light to remember  
those whom we have loved and lost.  
We remember their name, their face, their voice,  
the memory that binds them to us in this season.*

***May God's eternal love surround them.***

*This second candle we light to redeem the pain of loss;  
the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs,  
the loss of health.  
We gather up the pain of the past and offer it to God,  
asking that from God's hands we receive the gift of peace.*

***Refresh, restore, renew us O God,  
and lead us into your future.***

*This third candle we light to remember ourselves this Advent.  
We remember these past weeks and months;  
the disbelief, the anger, the poignancy of reminiscing,  
the hugs and handshakes of family and friends,  
all those who stood with us.  
We give thanks for all the support we have known.*

***Let us remember that dawn defeats darkness.***

*This fourth candle we light to remember our faith  
and the gift of hope which the Christmas story offers to us.  
We remember that God, who shares our life, promises us  
a place and time of no more pain and suffering.*

***Let us remember the one who shows the way,  
who brings the truth and who bears the light.***

*Act of Praise*

*"In the Bleak Midwinter"*

*Chris Abbott*

*Gustav Holst*

*I will lift up mine eyes to the hills.  
From where does my help come?  
**My help comes from God who made heaven and earth.**  
God will not suffer your foot to be moved.  
The one who keeps you will not slumber.  
**Behold the one who keeps Israel shall not slumber or sleep.**  
The Holy one is your keeper.  
The Holy one is your shade on your right hand.  
**The sun shall not hurt you by day nor the moon by night.**  
Our God shall preserve you from evil  
and shall preserve your soul.  
**Our God shall preserve your going out and your coming in  
from this time forth and even for evermore.***

Reflective Reading

Isaiah 40 (selected verses)

Hymn No. 218 (remain seated)

*"It Came Upon a Midnight Clear"*

CAROL

***It came upon a midnight clear,  
that glorious song of old,  
from angels bending near the earth,  
to touch their harps of gold:  
"Peace on the earth, good will to men,  
from heaven's all gracious King."  
The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.***

***And ye, beneath life's crushing load,  
whose forms are bending low,  
who toil along the climbing way  
with painful steps and slow,  
look now! for glad and golden hours  
come swiftly on the wing.  
O rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing!***

Invitation and Confession

*Christ our Lord invites to his table all who love him,  
who earnestly repent of their sin  
and seek to live in peace with one another.  
Therefore, let us confess our sin before God and one another.*

*Lord we confess our day to day failure to be truly human.  
**Lord, we confess to you.***

*Lord, we confess that we often fail  
to love with all we have and are,  
often because we do not fully understand  
what loving means,  
often because we are afraid of risking ourselves.  
**Lord, we confess to you.***

*Lord, we cut ourselves off from each other  
and we erect barriers of division.  
**Lord, we confess to you.***

*Lord, we confess that by silence and ill-considered word  
we have built up walls of prejudice.*

*Lord, we confess that by selfishness and lack of sympathy  
we have stifled generosity and left little time for others.*

*Holy Spirit, speak to us.*

*Help us listen to your word of forgiveness.*

*Come, fill this moment and free us from sin. Amen.*

*If we confess our sins,*

*God is faithful and just,*

*and will forgive our sins*

*and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

***Thanks be to God.***

### *The Peace*

*The peace of Christ be with you.*

***And also with you.***

### *The Great Thanksgiving*

*Lift up your hearts.*

***We lift them up to the Lord.***

*Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.*

***It is right to give our thanks and praise.***

*It is right and a good and joyful thing,*

*always and everywhere to give thanks to you,*

*almighty God, creator of heaven and earth.*

*In the beginning,*

*when darkness covered the face of the earth*

*and nothing existed but chaos,*

*your Spirit swept across the waters.*

*You spoke but a word,*

*and light was separated from darkness.*

*And so, with your people on earth*

*and all the company of heaven,*

*we praise Your name and join their unending hymn:*

***Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord, God of power and might,***

***Heaven and earth are full of your glory,***

***Hosanna in the highest.***

***Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.***

***Hosanna in the highest.***

*Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ;*

*who lived among us*

*and knew human pain and suffering;*

*who called all who were burdened*

*and heavy laden and gave them rest;*

*who healed the sick, fed the hungry,*

*and ate with sinners;*

*who cast out demons*

*and showed us the way to you through faith;*

*who took our suffering upon himself,*

*that we might be cleansed of our sins*

*and receive eternal life.*

*By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection,  
you gave birth to your Church,  
delivered us from slavery to sin and death,  
and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.*

*On the night in which he gave himself up for us,  
he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread,  
gave it to his disciples and said:*

*“Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.  
Do this in remembrance of me.”*

*When the supper was over he took the cup,  
gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:  
“Drink from this, all of you;  
this is my blood of the new covenant,  
poured out for you and for many  
for the forgiveness of sins.*

*Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”*

*And so,  
in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,  
we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving  
as a holy and living sacrifice,  
in union with Christ’s offering for us,  
as we proclaim the mystery of faith:*

***Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.***

*Pour out Your Holy Spirit on us gathered here,  
and on these gifts of bread and wine.*

*Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ,  
that we may be for the world the body of Christ,  
redeemed by His blood.*

*By the same Spirit heal us in body, mind, spirit,  
and relationships,  
cleansing away all that would separate us from you.*

*Renew our communion with all your saints,  
especially those who now live with you.*

*Since you have refreshed our souls from the waters of life,  
Help us refresh and renew others.*

*Since you have given us strength for the journey.  
Help us to strengthen others on their journey.*

*By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other,  
and one in ministry to all the world,  
until Christ comes in victory,  
and we feast at his heavenly banquet.*

***Send your Spirit to renew our faith and transform our souls  
So that we may hear your music,  
Work for justice, delight in heavenly food,  
And strengthen one another in love and grace.***

***Thanks to be God. Amen.***

*Giving the Bread and Cup*

\* Hymn No. 230

*“O Little Town of Bethlehem”*

ST. LOUIS

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

***For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,  
while mortals sleep, the angels keep  
their watch of wondering love.***

***O morning stars together, proclaim the holy birth,  
and praises sing to God the King, and peace to all on earth!***

\* *Invitation to the Labyrinth and Sending Forth to Journey*

*The Lord who heals all your iniquity  
bless you and keep you:  
the face of the Lord who heals all your afflictions  
shine upon you and be gracious to you;  
the light of countenance of the Lord  
who redeems your life be lifted upon you  
and give you peace. **Amen.***

\* *Please stand as you are able.*



*Rev. Jimmy Towson, Senior Pastor  
Rev. Tommy Perkins, Associate Pastor  
Cam Bishop, Director of Music/Pianist  
Ann Smith, Spiritual Director  
Chris Abbott, Soloist*

*Offering left on the communion rail  
will go to Pastor's Discretionary Fund.*