

Wednesday Evening Worship and Meditation December 16, 2020

*The service begins in silence so all may participate in a time of reflection:
May God help each of us to participate tonight and throughout the season as we are able.*

OPENING

We understand that the Christmas season can be difficult.
The holidays are full of memories, but some memories are bitter....

PRELUDE HYMN # 204

*Stay with Me
Sing Through Three Times*

STAY WITH ME

*Stay with me. Remain here with me.
Watch and pray. Watch and pray.*

At the Winter Solstice (next Monday) we will experience the longest night of the year. After the Winter Solstice, the light begins to return, and the days lengthen...

CALL TO WORSHIP

Here we are. We take refuge in our faith tonight.

Some of us are tired. Some are lonely. Loved ones are missed. Regrets are remembered.

We need light. Many hang artificial lights, but we need the true light of Christ.

Be not far from me, for trouble is near and there is none to help. Psalm 22:11

Out of the depths we cry to you, O Lord. O Lord, hear our voices! Psalm 130:1

Restore us to yourself, O Lord! Renew our days as of old! Lamentations 5:21

Blessed is the one who considers the poor; whom the Lord delivers in the day of trouble!

Psalm 41:1

OPENING HYMN

*In the Bleak Midwinter
Wayne Pope, Baritone*

CRANHAM

THE READING OF SCRIPTURE

Habakkuk 1:1, 2:1-4

O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? I will stand at my watch post...

I will keep watch to see what [the Lord] will say to me...

Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it.

For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie.

If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay.

Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith.

A POEM

Read by Tom Moody

To Know the Dark, By Wendell Berry

*To go into the dark with a light
is to know the light.*

*To know the dark, go dark,
go without sight.*

And find

*that the dark too
blooms and sings*

and is traveled by dark feet and dark wings.

INSTRUMENTAL HYMN

Light One Candle to Watch

TIF IN VELDELE

A READING FROM ZEPHANIAH

Zephaniah 3:16-17

*Fear not, O Zion, be not discouraged! The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a mighty savior;
He will rejoice over you with gladness, and renew you in his love.*

A POEM

Read by Leslee Kirkconnell

Winter Song, by Wilfred Owen

*The browns, the olives, and the yellows died,
And were swept up to heaven; where they glowed
Each dawn and set of sun till Christmastide,
And when the land lay pale for them, pale-snowed,
Fell back, and down the snow-drifts flamed and flowed.*

*From off your face, into the winds of winter,
The sun-brown and the summer-gold are blowing;
But they shall gleam with spiritual glinter,
When paler beauty on your brows falls snowing,
And through those snows my looks shall be soft-going.*

A READING FROM HEBREWS

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE (Around the Advent Wreath)

The first candle is lighted.

This first candle is for those we have loved, but who are no longer with us in the world.

O God, by this light let us remember—faces... voices... the things they taught us...
the things they said.

The light which had receded is returning now. Likewise we seek the recovery of our loved ones' kind words, generous gestures, helpful thoughts. For our memories in this time of expectation, we thank you, Lord!

**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.**

A period of silent reflection

The second candle is lighted.

This second candle is for the things we have lost.

O God, by this light, we see lost relationships, the loss of trust, lost jobs, lost health, lost faith, lost joy. The light which had receded is returning. Likewise, we look to recover your promised peace. We will seek others to share our burdens. We will seek your healing for our wounds.

**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.**

A period of silent reflection

The third candle is lighted.

This third candle is for our busy, but worrisome, minds.

O God, by this light, bring into focus days the bitterness of bad memories, the sadness of grief, the negative thoughts, the dull drone of depressions.

The light which had receded is returning. By this light, let us see beyond what has hurt us and into the new day you are preparing.

**O come thou day-spring, 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.**

A period of silent reflection

The fourth candle is lighted.

This fourth candle is for faith, the gift of hope that God offers to us in the story of Jesus' birth. O God, by this light, let us see what you have done—and done out of the darkness of the night, form the humility of a stable, in holy conjunction with the challenges of human life.

The light which had receded is returning. The age is turning. Our hearts are turning.

**O come desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind;
Bid envy, strife, and discord cease; Fill the whole world with heaven's peace.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

A period of silent reflection

A READING FROM ISAIAH

Isaiah 9:2-6

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

*For unto us a child is been born, unto us a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.*

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Hymn #86

The People Who Walked in Darkness

ISAIAH 9

All verses

The people who walked in darkness awaken to see a great light.

The people who live in the land of the shadow rise to a star shining bright.

Refrain

His name is Wonderful Counselor, Almighty God,

Father forever, Prince of Peace.

For God has enlarged the nation and prospered the fruit of its land.

God's people are blest in the harvest of victory, gift from a bountiful hand.

Refrain

*The yoke of despair and bondage, the chains of the slave master's rod
are shattered and scattered like dust in a windstorm, loosed by the justice of God.*

Refrain

For us now a child is given, for all the despised and forlorn.

The rule of compassion shall rest on his shoulder. God's own Messiah is born!

Refrain

How vast is our God's dominion! How far truth and mercy extend.

The zeal of the Lord will accomplish its purpose: justice shall reign without end.

Refrain

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE (Responsive)

In the spirit of this season let us confidently ask God for what we need:

For ourselves as we participate in this Christmas; special people coping with our own losses, uncertainties, and fears.

God, hear our prayer. *And in your mercy, answer us.*

For our families and friends, that they may continue to help and support us.

God, hear our prayer. *And in your mercy, answer us.*

For any person we have loved who has died, for all the losses we know in our lives, that all may be redeemed by your Easter promise.

God, hear our prayer. *And in your mercy, answer us.*

For all who are dear to us, that you may bring them hope, love, peace, and joy.

God, hear our prayer. *And in your mercy, answer us.*

For our nation and for the world—so full of disease, discord, and death; bring us that peace once proclaimed by the Christmas Angels.

God, hear our prayer. *And in your mercy, answer us.*

For greater understanding of the lessons of love and acceptance as taught by Jesus Christ.

God, hear our prayer. *And in your mercy, answer us.*

God of great compassion and love, listen to the prayers of these your people. Grant to all, especially the bereaved and troubled ones this Christmas, the blessing we ask in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray:

THE LORD’S PRAYER

CLOSING HYMN # 829

My Faith Looks Up to Thee
Verses 1 and 3 Only

OLIVET

My faith looks up to Thee, thou Lamb of Calvary, Savior Divine!
Now hear me while I pray; take all my guilt away; O let me from this day be wholly thine!
While life’s dark maze I tread, and griefs around me spread; be thou my guide;
bid darkness turn to day; wipe sorrow’s tears away; nor let me ever stray from thee aside.

BLESSING AND BENEDICTION

O God, support us all the day long in this troubled life,
until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed,
and the fever of life is over, and our work is done.

Then Lord, in thy mercy, grant us safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last. Amen.

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace, both now and forever more. Amen.
The peace of the Lord be always with you.

Portions of this service were based on an order developed and used
at The Cathedral Church of Saint Andrew, Honolulu, Hawaii.

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