

Blue Christmas



*A Service of
Comfort and Hope*
7 p.m.

Our Pastoral Leadership:

Rev. Bob Thomson

Organist:

Mrs. Eleanor Lane



First
Presbyterian
Church

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*Vibrant Worship,
Vibrant Discipleship,
Vibrant Service*



Serving Christ Since 1869

PRELUDE

“Silent Night”

Gruber

Silent Meditation: Welcome! As we gather this evening we invite you as you listen to the Organ Prelude to spend this time in quiet meditation or prayer.

HYMN

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

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!

CALL to WORSHIP Luke 1

Leader: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for he has looked favorably on his people

People: God has raised up a mighty savior for us

Leader: God has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,

People: And God has remembered his holy covenant

Leader: By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us.

People: God will give light to those who sit in darkness. Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength.

WELCOME

Rev. Bob Thomson

Old Testament Scripture

Psalm 121

If 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 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.

PRAYER OF INVOCATION (Unison)

O God, our God, we shrink before the great mystery of your presence and power. You are the source and redeemer of life; we are mortal and we strive to trust in you and the eternity you provide. Only you fully know and understand the places that we find ourselves: between faith and doubt, light and darkness, hope and despair, joy and sadness, peace and unrest. Only you can deliver us from grief into the truth of your consolation. We seek not to be comfortable but to be comforted, for we know that You are our Comforter. Help us in this night, to see beyond the darkness into your glorious light, to move in heart and mind beyond our grief into your ever-present care; and to find in this season of celebration your permission to be and to feel fully human. For we long to know Christ even in our pain and sadness, the One who was born to set us free and give us the gift of life. Amen.

A Liturgy of Remembrance Lighting of the Advent Candles

First Candle

Leader: The first candle we light to remember those persons whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their name, their face, their voice, their life, the memory that binds them to us in this season. 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.

People: Lord, each of us takes our loved one by the hand and leads them to you, the God of love. Accept our love and thanksgiving as we entrust them to your loving care. We know our loved ones are at home with you. We ask that you save a place for us beside them. Thank you for the gift each of these people has been in our lives. We believe that we will celebrate the treasure of love with them again, when we are all in your presence forever. May this truth sustain us in the days to come. Take our sad and aching hearts and comfort us. Comfort us, for we only feel hollowness and emptiness. God of sorrowing, draw near! Amen.

A Period of Silence: Please take a moment to remember those who have died. I invite you to name them, aloud or in the silence of your hearts....

CLOSING

As we gather this evening, we embrace and claim the darkness that is present both in the world and in our own lives. As people who are familiar with the darkness, we also know that we gather to be illumined by the light of the Christ Child this Christmas season. May the Christ Child, born in a lowly stable, himself an outcast and marginal, bring light, comfort, peace, and joy this holiday season. May the hope of the Christ Child sustain us through the darkness and may his light bring us comfort.

HYMN

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

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!

BENEDICTION

Psalm 34:8

“O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed are those who take refuge in him.”

POSTLUDE

“Infant Holy, Infant Lowly”

Polish

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE

Leader: In the spirit of this season let us now confidently ask God for all the things we need; For ourselves as we participate in whatever way we can this Christmas.

***People:* God hear our Prayer, and in your mercy answer.**

Leader: For our families and friends as they continue to help and support us.

***People:* God hear our Prayer, and in your mercy answer.**

Leader: For those losses we have experienced and the grief we have felt. For the person we have loved that has died, that they may be redeemed by your Easter promise.

***People:* God hear our Prayer, and in your mercy answer.**

Leader: For our family and friends, that they may know love and peace and happiness in you.

***People:* God hear our Prayer, and in your mercy answer.**

Leader: For our world as it suffers through times of darkness and sin. May your light dispel the darkness and give hope.

***People:* God hear our Prayer, and in your mercy answer.**

Leader: For the peace proclaimed by the Christmas angels, to come throughout the whole world.

***People:* God hear our Prayer, and in your mercy answer.**

Leader: Let us pray...

Prayer (Unison):

Now, dear Lord, be with those who wake or watch or weep tonight, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend your sick ones, rest your weary ones, bless your dying ones, soothe your suffering ones, pity your afflicted ones, and shield your joyous ones, all for your love's sake through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Second Candle

Leader: The second candle we light is to redeem the pain of loss; the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health in ourselves or in family members, the loss of joy and peace in our lives. As we acknowledge and embrace the pain of the past, we gather up that pain and offer it to you. O God, into our open hands place the gift of peace.

***People:* God of mystery, we turn our hearts to you. We come before you in need of peace, grateful for the mystery of life and keenly aware of your promises to protect. We want to place our trust in you, but our hearts are fearful. Help us remember that through you all things are possible. Refresh, restore, and renew us O God. Lead us into your future.**

A Period of Silence: Please take a moment to remember your losses. I invite you to name them, aloud or in the silence of your hearts....

Third Candle

Leader: We light the third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause to remember the past weeks, months, and for some years, that have been heavy with burden. We accept and lay before you, O 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 feel we have fallen short and 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.

***People:* We remember that we have journeyed far and though 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 is dark, with time the dawn will come and defeat the darkness.**

A Period of Silence: Please take a moment to pray for yourself - opening your hearts to God for healing.

Fourth Candle

Leader: We light this fourth candle to remember faith, the gift of light and hope that God offers to us in the story of Christmas, which began in confusion, insecurity, humbleness, and in a quiet manger. We remember that the loving God came to live among us promising us comfort and peace.

People: **We remember the One who shares our burdens, who is the Light of the world, who illuminates our path forward and journeys with us into our tomorrow.**

A Period of Silence: Please take a moment to meditate on God's light coming into any darkness in your life and bringing God's love.

The Christ Candle

Leader: In the midst of our darkness the light of Christ enters, God illuminates the darkness that we might be in his presence and experience his love and peace.

UNISON READING of Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff— they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.

A Period of Silence: Please take a moment in time of prayer to God.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 139:1-12 (pg. 503)
O LORD, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it. Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast. If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night', even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

Message

Communion and Stations of Comfort

Stations

Communion
Candle at Nativity
Rocks and Water Station
Cloth for the Cradle
Prayer

Communion

We will be serving communion in the front and then invite you to participate in the stations as you choose.

In the sanctuary, we have stations of comfort set up. These stations are an offering of rituals to help you find comfort and peace during this difficult time. You are free to participate in any of the stations you choose. If a station is busy, feel free to go to another station or spend time in prayer in the pews.

Take your time at these stations. There is no rush. When finished return to your seat and we will continue the order of service.

Candle Station

In the middle of the sanctuary, there are votive candles set up. You can light a candle in memory of a loved one, remembering them as they live on and shine in your heart.

Rocks & Water Station

In the middle of the sanctuary, there are rocks you can hold as you pray for the areas you are struggling with. Then place the rock in the water and ask the Lord to surround them in God's love and protection.

Cloth for the Cradle

In the middle of the sanctuary, there is a cradle with strips of cloth. You are invited to write the name(s) of your loved one(s), or write the situation that is causing you pain, on the strips of cloth; and then drape them in the cradle. You may use as many strips of cloth as you want. We remember that Jesus was wrapped in swaddling cloth and laid in the manger.

Prayer Station

At the back of the sanctuary there is a prayer station. People are there to pray for you and to anoint you with oil, if you choose.

Come back to your seat for a time of stillness and quiet.