

6:00 p.m. Service

The Longest Night Service

December 21, 2023

Words of Welcome

Tamera Pirraglia

Call to Worship

Leader: Remember the messengers of faith you have known, rejoice, and give thanks for their witness.

People: We, too, will prepare the way of Christ; we will help to level the hills and valleys of life.

Leader: Hold one another in your hearts this day; pray that love may rule all your relationships.

People: We will weep with those who weep. We will rejoice with those who rejoice.

Leader: God will be with you wherever you go.

All: AMEN.

*Hymn of Praise

'O Come, O Come Emmanuel'

Psalm 100 Band

A Poem

'Dark Places'

Patti Crenshaw

Opening Prayer

Gregg Weatherly

God of love and understanding, we gather here this evening to confront our pain in the midst of the world's celebration. Help us know that you are present with us in all of our moods and feelings and seasons. Grant us a taste of the hope, peace, joy, and love that you promise to all of your people through the gift of your son Jesus. Remind us, once again, that the worst thing is never the last thing.

AMEN.

Scripture Readings:

Luke 14:15-24

Rossie Koss

Matthew 11:28-29

Larry Ivins

Revelation 7:15-17

Jack Hansen

Song of Preparation

'For This I Have Jesus'

Psalm 100 Band

Message of Hope

Dave McAda

Candle Lighting

Lisanne Cisson, Delma Lord, Pat Hansen

We light four candles tonight in honor of our loved ones and to acknowledge our pain for any loss we have experienced that consumes us tonight. We light one for our **grief**, one for our **courage**, one for our **memories**, and one for our **love**.

Grief

This candle represents our **grief**. We grieve relationships, events, or situations that are not where we would like them to be. We own the pain of losing loved ones, of dreams that go unfulfilled, of hopes that evaporate in despair as we face the loss in our life.

[Following reading, a candle is lit; brief silence follows.]

Courage

This candle represents our **courage**. It symbolizes the courage to confront our sorrow, to comfort each other, to share our feelings honestly and openly with each other, and to dare to hope in the midst of pain.

[Following reading, a candle is lit; brief silence follows.]

Memories

This candle represents our **memories**: for the times we laughed together, cried together, were angry with each other or overjoyed with each other. We light this candle for the memories of caring and joy we shared together.

[Following reading, a candle is lit; brief silence follows.]

Love

This candle represents our **love**. The love we have given, and the love we have received. The love that has gone unacknowledged and unfelt, and the love that has been shared in times of joy and sorrow.

[Following reading, a candle is lit; brief silence follows.]

Invitation to Light a Candle

Dave McAda

('Mary Did You Know' Psalm 100 Band)

Christ Candle Lighting

The Christ Candle offers the HOPE of the Light of Christ. So, 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.

Prayer

Delma Lord

Comforting God, wrap us in your presence in this time of remembrance. With these candles, help us find your light, a light that will guide us day by day, step by step, as we try to live life fully and wholly. We cherish the special ways in which we have been touched by our loved ones. We thank you for the gift their lives have been to us. Now comfort us, encourage us, empower us. **AMEN.**

*Hymn of Sending

'It Came Upon a Midnight Clear'

Psalm 100 Band

Blessing

Tamera Pirraglia

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!

People: Thanks be to God. AMEN.

(You are invited to come forward and spend more time at the altar or take one of the candles home with you following the service.)

Stephen Ministry is "Christ Caring for People through People"

Stephen Ministry provides a caring, non-judgmental and confidential one-to-one relationship between a trained church member and a person experiencing a difficult time or transition in his or her life. Stephen Ministers are caring Christian friends who accept, encourage, understand, pray for and with people in times of trouble. Our Stephen Ministers are trained and skilled caregivers, and will walk beside you and offer comfort, love and support throughout your crisis and remind you of God's love, presence, and healing power in your life.

Contact our TRUMC Stephen Ministry Leaders if you would like more information about being matched with one of our Stephen Ministers or training to become a Stephen Minister yourself: Patti Crenshaw (864) 380-8421 or Dave McAda (864) 380-5867

Travelers Rest United Methodist Church

The Church on the Trail

Walking with Christ, Serving God, Changing Lives.

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Scriptures (NIV) and Readings

Luke 14:15-24

When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, “Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.” Jesus replied: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’ “But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’ “Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’ “Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’

“The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’ “‘Sir,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’ “Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.’”

Matthew 11:28-29

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, 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.”

Revelation 7:15-17

Therefore, “they are before the throne of God
and serve him day and night in his temple;
and he who sits on the throne
will shelter them with his presence.
‘Never again will they hunger;
never again will they thirst.
The sun will not beat down on them,
nor any scorching heat.
For the Lamb at the center of the throne
will be their shepherd;
‘he will lead them to springs of living water.’
‘And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.’

‘Dark Places’ by Patti Crenshaw

Life as I once knew it has disappointed me.
The pain engulfs my every being, an ache no one understands.
Lost, hurting, longing for what once was.
The world moves on and I am left to hold this pain within.
Such a dark place. I let no one in.
God sends me Hope.
with Hope...
my burdens seem lighter, my pain is acknowledged, not buried so deep within.
with Hope...
as I go through my longest night, I know the dawn will come.
with Hope...
the small sliver of light in the morning calms my aches from such pain, such suffering,
such loneliness.
with Hope..
life as I once knew it will never be the same, but I know I am not alone, I am loved.
with Hope...
God is present with me, I feel the peace only He can give as He holds me in his arms.

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