

Winter Solace Service  
December 20, 2022

I will light candles this Christmas:  
Candles of joy despite all sadness,  
Candles of hope where despair keeps  
watch,  
Candles of courage for fears ever  
present,  
Candles of peace for tempest-tossed  
days,  
Candles of grace to ease heavy  
burdens,  
Candles of love to inspire all my  
living,  
Candles that will burn all the year  
long.

Howard Thurman



CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
30 N. CLINTON ST.  
IOWA CITY, IA 52245  
319-337-4301

WORSHIP FOR DECEMBER 20, 2022  
WINTER SOLACE SERVICE

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

In this Advent season, we wait expectantly, longingly, anxiously.

**In the night we see the splendor of the universe—  
the blankets of stars, the solitary glowing of planets.**

In the darkness that contains both our hopelessness and our hope,  
we watch for signs of God's light.

**God is with us, even now.**

\*HYMN 38 "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear" (vs. 1 &3)

OPENING PRAYER

**God of our life, in this time of diminishing light we are grateful for your presence and for the presence of those who watch with us. As we lift up our losses and all that troubles us, may we find new strength in the rest that night brings. And may we find new comfort as your morning dawns; through Jesus Christ. Amen.**

## CANDLE LIGHTING AND LITANY OF REFLECTION, REMEMBRANCE, AND ACCEPTANCE

We light this first candle to remember those whom we have lost to death.

We say their names aloud or in the silence of our hearts

We remember them in their living and what their lives meant to us.

**We are grateful for the memories that keep them with us in this season of expectation, when all Creation waits for the Light.**

We light this second candle to help us accept the pain of loss:

loss of relationships, loss of trust, loss of jobs, loss of faith, loss of hope.

**We acknowledge the pain of the past, O God, and we offer it to you.**

**We lay down the burdens of our past and ask that you place the gift of possibility into our open hands.**

We light this third candle for those who are facing illness.

**Be with all those who struggle in body, mind, or spirit.**

**Send them your healing presence.**

**And give us all reassurance in the face of our mortality.**

We light this fourth candle to recall those who are experiencing the devastation of disasters: storms, fires, floods, drought, earthquakes, and war.

**We ask that you give courage and strength to those who are enduring these things.**

**And give to all of us the will to come together to overcome what seems insurmountable.**

## MUSICAL MEDITATION

Hear our prayers O God. Shine your light on all who suffer and have sorrow. Amen.

SCRIPTURE LESSON      Romans 8:24-27, 38-39

PASTORAL WORDS

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

A PRAYER (WITH SIX DEEP BREATHS)

God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.  
Loving God,

1

We breathe in the air of life...

We breathe out anxiety...

2

We breathe in your hope...

We breathe out despondency...

3

We breathe in your grace...

We breathe out annoyances and irritation...

4

We breathe in your peace...

We breathe out our worries...

5

We breathe in your Wisdom...

We breathe out despair...

6

We breathe in your love...

We breathe out the suffering that isolates us...

**God consoles us in all our troubles,  
so that we in turn may be able to console others in any trouble of theirs  
and to share with them the consolation we ourselves receive from God.**  
(II Corinthians 1:4)

REFRAIN

**The rising sun shall shine on us  
To bring the light of day  
To all who sit in darkest night  
And shadow of the grave.  
Our footsteps God shall safely guide  
To walk the ways of peace,  
Whose name forever more be blest,  
Who lives and loves and saves.**

SENDING

The power of God strengthen you.  
the love of God dwell in you and give you peace.

Call to Worship: Adapted from the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand  
Candle Lighting and Litany Of Reflection, Remembrance, and Acceptance adapted from The  
Cathedral Church of Saint Andrew, Honolulu Hawaii  
A Prayer (with Six Deep Breaths) by Carol Howard Merritt, adapted.