

Winter Solace Service
December 16, 2021

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



PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

(Adapted from the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand)

In this Advent season, we wait in the darkness—expectantly, longingly, anxiously, thoughtfully

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

In the solitude of the darkness our fears and concerns,
our hopes and visions rise to the surface.

**We come face-to-face with ourselves and with the road that lies ahead of us
And in that same darkness we find companionship for the journey.**

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

God is with us, even now. Let us worship God.

OPENING PRAYER

**God of our life, in this time of diminishing light and increasing night we are grateful for
your presence and for the presence of one another. Help us in the darkness to better see the
stars that guide us. As we lift up our losses and all that troubles us, may we find new
strength in the rest that darkness brings. In the faith that sees a new day, may we wait and
work toward its dawning; through Jesus Christ. Amen.**

CANDLE LIGHTING AND LITANY OF REFLECTION, REMEMBRANCE, AND ACCEPTANCE

(Adapted from The Cathedral Church of Saint Andrew, Honolulu Hawaii)

We light the first candle to remember those who have died.

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

We embrace and give thanks for the memories that keep them with us in this season of expectation, when all Creation waits for the Light.

Pause for reflection

We light the next candle to remember the pain of loss:

loss of relationships, loss of trust, loss of jobs, loss of health, loss of faith, loss of joy.

We acknowledge and embrace the pain of the past, O God, and we offer it to You, asking that into our wounded hearts and open hands You will place the gift of peace.

Pause for reflection

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

We seek your presence as the One who shares our burdens and walks with us.

Pause for reflection

We light the next candle remembering those who experience the devastation of natural disasters: storms, hurricanes, tornadoes, fires, floods, drought, and earthquakes.

We look for the courage to endure and to come together to overcome what seems insurmountable.

Pause for reflection

We light the fifth candle to remember the difficulties we have gone through this year.

We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and for some of us, even the past years, that have been heavy with our burdens.

We accept and lay before you the time we have walked alone, in darkness, and in knowledge of our own mortality.

Pause for reflection

We light this candle in faith and in the hope that God offers to us in the story of Christmas, which began in abandonment, insecurity, and humbleness, in a time of war and in a poor stable.

We remember that the loving God who came to share this life with us promises us comfort and peace.

Pause for reflection

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

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

SCRIPTURE LESSON Matthew 11:28-30

A PRAYER (WITH SIX DEEP BREATHS)

Loving God,

1

We breathe in your life,
knowing that from creation
your breath is our breath.
We breathe out our anxiety,
acknowledging the stress that increases
with every blaring headline and dire event.

2

We breathe in your hope,
knowing that you can make a way
out of no way.
We breathe out the despondency,
that creeps upon us,
paralyzing us from doing good.

3

We breathe in your grace,
as we pray for patience with our loved ones
and endurance in our waiting.
We breathe out our petty annoyances,
and irritations
that make us forget the importance of our bonds.

4

We breathe in your peace,
which surpasses all our understanding,
and guards our hearts and minds.
We breathe out our worries,
all of our need to be in control,
and the tension in our being.

5

We breathe in your wisdom,
that keeps perspective in our crisis,
reminding us of what is important.
We breathe out despair
that blocks us from seeing possibilities
and blinds us from your vision.

