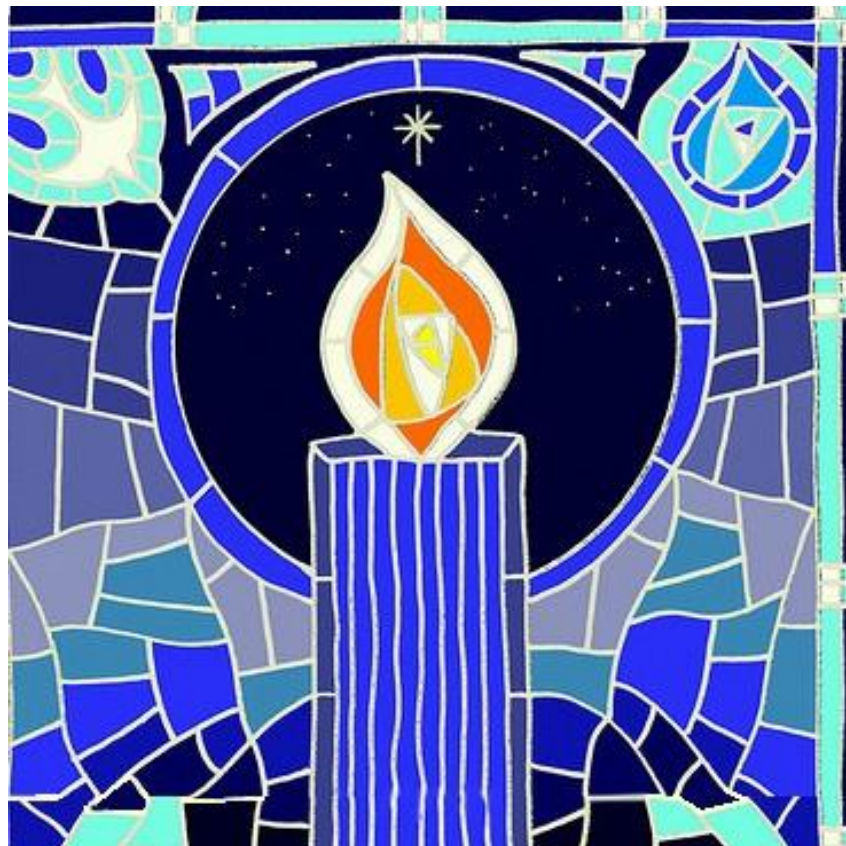


# *Winter Solace Service*



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

WORSHIP FOR DECEMBER 20, 2023  
WINTER SOLACE SERVICE

PRELUDE    “Andante sostenuto,” Op. 72, No. 2                      Felix Mendelssohn

CALL TO WORSHIP (from Psalms 121 & 34)

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.**

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted  
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

**Let us draw near to God.**

\*HYMN 44 “O Little Town of Bethlehem” (vs. 1 & 3)

#### OPENING PRAYER

**God our comforter, we come to you tonight with our sorrows and our grief, knowing that our whole lives are in your care. You are the Sovereign of both day and night and yet you dwell with us in our inmost being. 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—A TIME FOR 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 are grateful for their lives and what they meant to us. We pray that the good they did will continue in the lives of those who knew them.

**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 work, 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 burden of our loss and ask that you place the gift of possibility into our hands.**

We Light This Third Candle

for those who are facing illness.

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

**Send them your healing presence.**

**Send them your courage and strength.**

**Give us all reassurance in the face of our mortality.**

We Light This Fourth Candle

for those who are caught in the devastation of war and disasters.

**Deliver them from these circumstances.**

**Support those who are recovering and rebuilding.**

**We ask that you will lead us all in the ways that bring peace.**

#### MUSICAL MEDITATION

“Sicilienne” Maria-Theresia v. Paradis  
Diane Dahl-McCoy, violin

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

Matthew 5:4-9

Matthew 11:28-30

PASTORAL WORDS

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

A PRAYER (WITH SIX DEEP BREATHS)

1

We breathe out anxiety...  
We breathe in the air of life...

2

We breathe out our despondency...  
We breathe in your hope...

3

We breathe out our irritation...  
We breathe in your grace...

4

We breathe out our worries...  
We breathe in your peace...

5

We breathe out our despair...  
We breathe in your Wisdom...

6

We breathe out the suffering that isolates  
us...  
We breathe in your love...

**The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,  
God's mercies never come to an end;  
they are new every morning;  
great is your faithfulness.  
"The Lord is my portion," says my soul.  
"therefore I will hope in God."  
(Lamentations 3:22-24)**

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.**

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE "Sinfonia in A Minor," BWV 799 J.S. Bach

A Prayer (with Six Deep Breaths) by Carol Howard Merritt, adapted.—not for bulletin