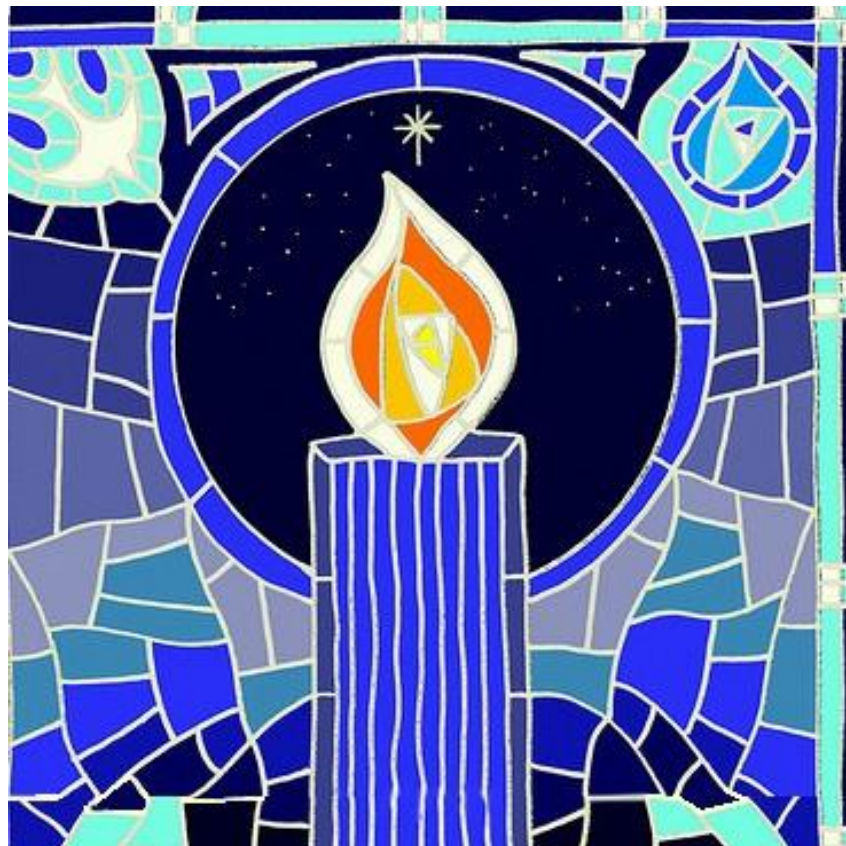


Winter Solace Service



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

WORSHIP FOR DECEMBER 18, 2024
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 our comforter, we come to you tonight with our sorrows and our griefs, 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 quiet 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 others.

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 gifts of possibility into our hands.

We Light This Third Candle

for all who are facing illness.

Send your healing presence.

Send your courage and strength.

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

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

II Corinthians 1:3-7

Matthew 11:28-30

PASTORAL WORDS

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

A PRAYER (WITH SIX DEEP BREATHS)

1
We breathe out our anxiety...
We breathe in the spirit of your calm...

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 the comfort of the community that gathers us together...

**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)**

*HYMN 44 "O Little Town of Bethlehem" (vs. 1 & 3)

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

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.