

LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE

A Night of Remembrance, Comfort & Hope
7 p.m., December 20, 2023, Shelby Presbyterian Church

GREETING

Rev. Dr. Richard Hart

CALL TO WORSHIP - from Matthew 11 & Psalm 107

Drew Mangione, Pastor

As the Christ Candle is being lit:

Jesus said, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."

His steadfast love endures forever.

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart."

His steadfast love endures forever.

"In me, you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

His steadfast love endures forever.

Let us praise our God, who sent the Son to share our humanity, and the Spirit who groans with us.

Let us worship the Lord, God-with-us, who knows our sorrows

OPENING HYMN: *"O Lord, How Shall I Meet You?"*

O Lord, how shall I meet You, how welcome You aright?
Your people long to greet You, my hope, my heart's delight!
Oh kindle, Lord most holy, Your lamp within my breast
To do in spirit lowly all that may please You best.

Love caused Your incarnation; love brought You down to me.
Your thirst for my salvation procured my liberty.
Oh, love beyond all telling, that led You to embrace
In love, all love excelling, our lost and fallen race.

I lay in fetters groaning; You came to set me free.
I stood, my shame bemoaning; You came to honor me.
A glorious crown You give me, a treasure safe on high
That will not fail nor leave me as earthly riches fly.

Rejoice, then, you sad-hearted, who sit in deepest gloom,
Who mourn your joys departed and tremble at your doom.
Despair not; He is near you, there, standing at the door,
Who best can help and cheer you and bids you weep no more.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Richard Hart

FIRST READING: Psalm 13:1-2a, 5-6

SECOND READING: John 1:1-14

FINAL READING: Revelation 21:3-7 Carol Ann Hoard, Min. of Christian Education/Families

ADVENT CANDLE LITANY

With our first candle, we remember those whom we have loved and lost, those to whom we have been tethered, and without whom life feels chaotic. We pause to remember them, their faces, their voices, the memories that bind us to them this season, and the hope of life in God.

Assure us, O God, that Your eternal love surrounds them.

With our second candle, we remember the pain of loss which only God can redeem. Through the loss of relationships, jobs, and health. Through the loss of hopes, dreams, expectations, and plans. Through the suffering we endure in unwelcome change, we pause to gather up the pain, offer it to God, and humbly ask for peace, the wholeness that comes from God.

Refresh, restore, and renew us, O God, and lead us into Your future.

With our third candle, we remember with gratitude those who have reached out to us when our lives have been uncertain, providing us stability amid the pain of loss. We are mindful of those of our church family with whom we are gathered this night. We are grateful for the glimpse of joy we receive in the presence and listening of others, who reveal the love of God.

Bless, O God, our family of faith whom You have gathered to us in this place.

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC:

Bruce Moser

During the special music, reflect on the joys and sorrows you bring to this service. Consider what you might share with your friends in faith who are assembled here tonight. Those who wish to speak may do so following the music.

SHARING JOYS AND SORROWS

Richard Hart

UNISON PRAYER - A Morning Prayer by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Christmas 1943 while in prison)

Dr. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a pastor of the German Lutheran Church, a professor of theology, and author of such classics as *The Cost of Discipleship* and *Life Together*. As a dedicated Christian he was a leader in the German resistance which led to his eventual arrest and imprisonment. He was hanged by the Nazis on April 9, 1945 shortly before the end of World War II.

O God, early in the morning I cry to You. Help me to pray and to concentrate my thoughts on You; I cannot do this alone. In me there is darkness, but with You there is light. I am lonely, but You do not leave me; I am feeble in heart, but with You there is help; I am restless, but with You there is peace; In me there is bitterness, but with You there is patience; I do not understand Your ways, but You know the way for me. O heavenly Father, I praise You and thank You for the peace of the night; I praise and thank You for this new day. You have granted me many blessings; now let me also accept what is hard from Your hand. You will lay on me no more than I can bear. You make all things work together for good for your children. Amen.

CANDLE LIGHTING: *"In Deepest Night"*

Bruce Moser, soloist

Light a candle as you are led as a form of prayer, remembrance of loved ones, or plea for God's peace.

UNISON BENEDICTION (From Compline Evening prayers, often attributed to Augustine of Hippo)

Drew Mangione

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for Your love's sake. Amen.

Closing Hymn: *"It Came Upon a Midnight Clear"*

#38, The Blue Presbyterian Hymnal

Following the closing hymn help yourself to a cup of coffee, hot chocolate, or something cool to drink and then return to sit and visit with each other for additional comfort and encouragement.

Thank you for participating in tonight's worship service.

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