

Mt. Zion United Church of Christ

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Rev. Danielle E. Neff, Senior Pastor

Rev. Amy Northridge, Transitional Minister

Mr. Denny Daugherty, Adult Choir Director & Tech Director

Mr. Travis Pinci, Accompanist, Children's Music Coordinator, & Church Administrator

Blue Christmas

7:00 PM

WORDS OF WELCOME

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP & OPENING PRAYER¹

L: It takes faith beyond imagining to hear the Christmas story if you are living things too difficult to be made sense of by an ancient memory of angels and wise men.

P: And yet a light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.

L: It takes faith beyond imagining to hear the Christmas story when you know what a miracle it would take for love to be born right now in our world.

P: And yet a light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.

L: The alleluias we sing will not be to drown out the world's truths or to deny them; but to pray they will hold us in their faith.

P: Because a light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it.

L: So we gather—the bewildered, the broken hearted, the fragile and the hopeful, the faithful and the faithless because all we have left when we stand in the world's darkness is this longing for love to be born once again.

P: Because a light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it.

L: Let us pray. God of mercy and love, we gather here today as hurting people, bringing out pain, our sorrow and our confusion to this safe space tonight. Would you meet us in our darkness, and give us freedom to struggle together as we seek your presence? We ask for strength today, courage for tomorrow and peace for the past. Amen.

HYMN NO. 116 (black hymnal # 116, v. 1, see p. 5)

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

ALL SING: O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel. That mourns in lonely exile here until the Child of God appear. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES

The Empty Chair

Psalm 121: 1-3, 7b-8

I raise my eyes toward the mountains. Where will my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. God won't let your foot slip. Your protector won't fall asleep on the job... God will protect your very life. The Lord will protect you on your journeys—whether going or coming—from now until forever from now.

ALL SING (black hymnal #116, v. 2)

O Come, O Wisdom from on high, and order all things far and nigh; To us the path of knowledge show, and help us in that way to go. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

The First Candle ~ Grief

John 11: 32-35

"When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the people who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. Then Jesus wept.

ALL SING (black hymnal # 116, v. 3)

O Come, O come, O Adonai, who came to all on Sinai high, And from its peak of single law proclaimed the majesty and awe. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

The Second Candle ~ Pain

Matthew 11:28-29

Jesus said, "Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

ALL SING (black hymnal # 116, v. 6, see p. 5)

O come, O Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by your advent here; Love stir within the womb of night, and death's own shadows put to flight. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

The Third Candle ~ Fears

Isaiah 41:8-10

But you, O Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of Abraham my friend. I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, "you are my servant": I have chosen you and have not rejected you. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous hand."

ALL SING (black hymnal # 116, v. 7, see p. 5)

O come, Desire of Nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind; Make envy, strife, and quarrels cease; fill the whole world with heaven's peace. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

The Fourth Candle ~ Struggle

Revelation 21:1-6a

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth has passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them." They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God, he will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." He said to me: "It is done. I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end."

ALL SING (black hymnal # 116, v. 5, see p. 5)

O Come, O Key of David, come, and open wide your heavenly home; Make safe the path to endless day, to hell's destruction close the way. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

PRAYER FOR COMFORT

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

John 1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not overcome it.

The true light that shines on all people was coming into the world. The light was in the world, and the world came into being through the light, but the world did not recognize the light. The light came to his own people, and his own people didn't welcome him. But those who did welcome him, those who believed in his name, he authorized to become God's children...

The Word became flesh and made his home among us.

ALL SING (black hymnal # 116, v. 1, see p. 5)

**O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel that mourns in
lonely exile here, until the Child of God appear. Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!**

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

*We offer a hearing assistance system called Listen Technologies. If you would like to use a receiver,
please check with the volunteers at the sound booth at the rear of the sanctuary.*

*Thank you to Travis Pinci and Denny Daugherty for serving as our musicians in this evening's worship
service.*

¹The Call to Worship was based on liturgy written by Cheryl Lawrie and published on <http://holdthisspace.org/au/>
and accessed at <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2017/12/call-to-worship-for-longest-night.html> on December 5,
2021. The opening prayer was written by Melanie Carroll and posted at [http://sacraparental.com/2014/12/23/10-
things-i-learned-from-preparing-a-blue-christmas-church-service-guest/](http://sacraparental.com/2014/12/23/10-things-i-learned-from-preparing-a-blue-christmas-church-service-guest/) and accessed on December 5, 2021.

²This liturgy was adapted from Jon Komperda and Sharon N. Fennema. Sharon N. Fennema's original liturgy was
published in "Before the Amen."

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Piano $\text{♩} = 80$

1. O come, O come Em - man - u - el, and
 2. O come, O Wis - dom from on high, and
 3. O come, O come, O A - do - nai, who
 5. O come, O Key of Da - vid, come, and
 6. O come, O Day - spring, come and cheer our
 7. O come, De - sire of Na - tions bind all

5

ran - som cap - tive Is - ra - el that mourns in lone - ly
 or - der all things far and nigh; To us the path of
 came to all on Si - nai high; and from its peak a
 o - pen wide your heaven - ly home; Make safe the path to
 spir - its by your ad - vent here; Love stir with - in the
 peo - ples in one heart and mind; Make en - vy, strife and

9

ex - ile here, un - til the Child of God ap -
 knowl - edge show, and help us in that way to
 sin - gle law pro - claimed in maj - es - ty and
 end - less day, to hell's de - struc - tion close the
 womb of night, and death's own shad - ows put to
 quar - rels cease; fill the whole world with heav - en's

13

- pear. Re - jice! Re - jice! E - man - u -
 go.
 awe.
 way.
 flight.
 peace.

17

- el shall come to you, O Is - ra - el!