

~ Welcome ~

Blue Christmas: A Service of Reflection for the Longest Night December 22, 2019, 3:00 PM

Prelude "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silent"
Cindy Berry

Call to Worship
Pastor: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by God, and without God nothing came to be. What came to be through God was life, and this life was the light of the world.

People: The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Welcome *Pastor Jane Piehl*

***Hymn** "In The Bleak Mid Winter" UMH #221

The First Reading Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

Psalm 22
Pastor: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, so far from the words of my groaning?

All: O my God, I cry by day but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.

Pastor: In you, our ancestors trusted. They trusted and you delivered them.

All: It was you who brought me from the womb, you who kept me safe on my mother's breast. Since my mother bore me, you have been my God.

Pastor: Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

All: God does not despise the affliction of the afflicted. God does not hide from me.

When I cry to God, God hears me. Thanks be to God.

Psalm 23 (all read together) Pew Bible Page 510

Memory Strips of Cloth
You are invited to write on each strip of cloth you received. Your concerns for others or your own concerns

Music Interlude "The Ashokan Farewell"
by: Jay Ungar
Duet by: Teresa Whetstone, violin and Millie Frambaugh, piano

The Second Reading Isaiah 40, selected verses

Litany of Remembrance

The first candle is lit

Pastor: We light this first candle to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember clearly, their faces, their voices, their bodies. We embrace and give thanks for the memories that bind them to us in this season of expectation, when all Creation waits for the Light.

People: We remember them with love. May God's eternal love surround them.

Hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (vs. 1) UMH #211

The second candle is lit.

Pastor: We light this second candle to remember the pain of loss: loss of relationships, loss of trust, loss of jobs, loss of health, loss of faith, the 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, shalom.

People: We remember that through You all things are possible. Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into Your future.

Hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (vs. 2) UMH #211

The third candle is lit

Pastor: We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and for some of us years, that have been heavy with our burdens. We accept and lay before you, God, the sharpness of memory, the sadness and grief, the hurt and fear, the anger and pain. We accept and lay before you the ways we feel we have fallen short, and the times we have spent blaming ourselves, and you, for all that we have suffered. We accept and lay before you the time we have walked alone, in darkness; and in knowledge of our own mortality.

People: We remember that though we have journeyed far, and that, while lost, we may have turned away from the light, the light itself has not failed. We remember that though winter be upon us and though the night be dark, with the turning of the Wheel the dawn will come, and dawn defeats the darkness.

Hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (vs. 6) UMH #211

The fourth candle is lit

Pastor: We light this fourth candle to remember faith, the gift of light and hope that God offers to us in the stories of Hanukkah and of Christmas, which both also began in abandonment, insecurity, and humbleness, in a time of war and in a poor stable. We

remember that the loving God who kept the light shining in the temple and who came to share this life with us promises us comfort and peace.

People: We remember the One who shares our burdens, who shows us the way to the Light, and who journeys with us into all our tomorrows.

Hymn “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” (vs. 7) UMH #211
A period of silent reflection

***The Prayers of the People** See Screen

Song of Reflection “A Different Kind of Christmas” Solo by: Elaine Mravetz

Third Reading Luke 2:1-7

Offering of Light Pastor Jane Piehl
A Moment of Reflection

Pastor: Let us pray.

All: Gentle God of love, help us reach out together for the light of faith, for renewal and recovery and a new day coming. Grant that hope may come to rest in our hearts, and let it go forth with us into the darkness, this night and in the nights to come, until we see the dawn.

Pastor: Lighten our darkness, we beseech you, O God; give us light in the night season; and by your great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night. Amen.

Hymn “Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah” (vs. 1, 2) UMH No.127

Lighting of the Candles

Please bring your strips of cloth forward, place them in the manger and light a candle to remember a loss in your life. You may also receive an anointing with oil.

Psalm 121 (all read together) Pew Bible page 571

***Prayer**

Pastor: Let us pray.

All: Almighty God, we thank you for your constant love and for the blessings of this day. We know that even when we cannot see or feel you, still you are there. Help us to remember you and to listen for your voice in the words of family, friends, and strangers. Kindle our hearts and awaken hope, that we may know you as you reveal

yourself in the world and in our lives. Let the light of your Holy Spirit shine like these candles in the darkness, lighting the way for all who feel despairing, lost, or forgotten, and grant that it may come to dwell so deeply in our hearts that when we leave this place it may shine on, for us and for those we meet along the way. Amen.

***Hymn** “Come Thou Long Expected Jesus” UMH #196

***Concluding Prayers**

Pastor: Let us pray.

All: Another day will come, O God. I know not what it may bring forth, but make me ready, God, for whatever it may be. If I am to stand up, help me to stand bravely. If I am to sit still, help me to sit quietly. If I am to lie low, help me to do it patiently. And if I am to do nothing, help me do it gallantly. Make these words more than words, and give me the Spirit of thy Peace. Amen.

Pastor: O God, support us all day long in this troubled life, until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then Lord, in thy mercy, grant us safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last. Amen.

Blessing and Dismissal

Postlude “God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen”
Arr. By: Cindy Berry

*Indicates congregation to stand

Pastor Jane Piehl
Millie Frambaugh
Bill Baldwin, Ann Passmore

Pastor
Music Director
Greeters

Please join us for refreshments in the Gathering Place immediately following the service. You are welcome to take home a Blue Christmas candle and use it to remember a loved one or a loss that has impacted your life this year.

Candlelight Christmas Eve Service at 7pm.

Join us for worship on Sunday Mornings at 10:30am

Welcome to Sharon Center United Methodist Church!

If you are visiting with us for the first time, we are glad you are here! Please make sure to sign the attendance pad as it is passed during the service and let us know your contact information. We welcome all to our Worship Service and our Communion Table is open to everyone. Please join us in our activities and gatherings and if you have a question, just ask, and come back again soon! At Sharon Center UMC we are committed to building relationships with Jesus Christ. For families of all ages, this is a great community to join as you grow in your relationship with God and with others.

www.sharoncenterumc.org

SHARON CENTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Worship Service: 10:30am

Church Office: (330) 239-1616

SharonCenterUMCSecretary@gmail.com

Church hours: Mon, Weds 11a-1p, Fri 11a-3p

December 22, 2019

Pastor Jane Piehl

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