



CARMICHAEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

December 17, 2023

3:00 p.m.

PRELUDE

“A Rossetti Christmas”

Rick Schlosser

arr. Mark Hayes

WORDS OF WELCOME

Pastor Ivan N. Herman

CALL TO WORSHIP AND OPENING PRAYER

Leader: The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

People: And also with you.

Leader: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow, a light has shone. For the yoke that was weighing upon them, and the burden upon their shoulders, you have broken in pieces, O God, our Redeemer. Let us pray:

People: God of mercy, hear our prayer in this Advent season for ourselves and for our families who live with painful thoughts and memories. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow, and peace for the past. We ask these things in the name of Christ, who abides with us and shares our life in joy and sorrow, death and new birth, despair and promise. Amen.

1 A - bide with me: fast falls the e - ven - tide.
 2 Swift to its close ebbs out life's lit - tle day;
 3 I need thy pres - ence ev - ery pass - ing hour;
 4 I fear no foe, with thee at hand to bless;
 5 Hold thou thy cross be - fore my clos - ing eyes;

The dark - ness deep - ens; Lord, with me a - bide!
 earth's joys grow dim; its glo - ries pass a - way;
 what but thy grace can foil the tempt - er's power?
 ills have no weight, and tears no bit - ter - ness.
 shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.

When oth - er help - ers fail and com - forts flee,
 change and de - cay in all a - round I see.
 Who, like thy - self, my guide and stay can be?
 Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy vic - to - ry?
 Heaven's morn - ing breaks, and earth's vain shad - ows flee;

help of the help - less, O a - bide with me.
 O thou who chang - est not, a - bide with me.
 Through cloud and sun - shine, Lord, a - bide with me.
 I tri - umph still, if thou a - bide with me.
 in life, in death, O Lord, a - bide with me.

CALL TO CONFESSION

Leader: Jesus said, “Ask and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” God knows our needs before we ask, and our asking prepares us to receive the gift of grace. We open our lives to God’s healing presence, seeking peace with God and reconciliation with our neighbors. Let us name before God whatever has wounded us or brought injury to others, that we may receive mercy and become for each other ministers of God’s grace.

Take a few moments now in silence to examine your heart.

(Silence)

Leader: Let us pray together.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

People: God of Mercy, we come to you with heavy hearts that we find hard to unburden. When long nights collide with the brilliance of Christmas lights, we find it hard to express our losses.

Open us to the understanding that you are the source of all love and we need not feel alone in our grief. Grant us wisdom to know and trust the infinite depths of your grace.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Leader: People of God, hear this good news! The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting. We open our lives to God’s healing presence and welcome it!

People: The God of Love is always with us even when we are lost in the long shadows of life. We lean into God’s faithful patience and strength and receive God’s mercy, care, and grace today.

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF ISAIAH (40:1, 25-31, paraphrased)

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

To whom will you compare me, or who even holds a candle to me? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes to the night sky and see: Who do you think made all this?

Who marches this army of stars out each night, counts them off, calls each by name—so magnificent! So powerful!— and never overlooks a single one?

Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel,

“God has lost track of me. God doesn’t care what happens to me?”

Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.

God does not faint or grow weary or out of breath.

God energizes those who get tired and gives fresh strength to the powerless.

Even young people will grow tired and weary.

Even those in their prime will stumble and fall.

but those who wait on God shall renew their strength,

they shall mount up with wings like eagles,

they shall run and not be weary,

they shall walk and not faint.

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

A LITURGY OF REMEMBRANCE
Lighting of Four Advent Candles

SONG

“Come, Come, Emmanuel”

No. 91

(Pastor Ivan will sing the first time through. Please join for three repetitions.) *Glory to God*

The musical score is written for a soprano and bass voice part. It is in the key of D major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The first system contains the first two lines of the melody. The lyrics are: 'Come, come Em - man - u - el. Come, Em -'. The second system contains the next two lines of the melody. The lyrics are: 'man - u - el. man - u - el.'. The first system is marked 'For repeat' and the second system is marked 'Final ending'. The score includes a treble clef and a bass clef, with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 3/4.

FIRST CANDLE: HOPE

Leader: The first candle we light is the candle of hope. Before we can look forward in hope we honor and remember those persons whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember names, voices, faces, and give thanks for what binds them to us in this season. We hold them before God, giving thanks.

Please take a moment to remember those who have died in the silence of your hearts....

Leader: Lord, each of us takes our loved one by the hand and leads them to you, the God of love. Accept our love and thanksgiving as we entrust them to your loving care and ask that you save a place for us beside them. We ask that you fill us with motivation and energy in the days ahead and remind us of your presence when we are caught up in the desolation of the journey. Help us to find hope in the people, events, and the beauty of nature that surrounds us.

People: **Thank you for the gift of these people who have been in our lives. We anticipate the day when we are all in your presence forever. May this hope sustain us in the days to come. Hold our sad and aching hearts close to your heart. Comfort us, God of sorrowing, and draw near!**

SONG

“Come, Come, Emmanuel”

No. 91

(Pastor Ivan will sing the first time through. Please join for three repetitions.) *Glory to God*

SECOND CANDLE: PEACE

Leader: The second candle we light is for peace. We light it to bring peace to the pain of loss: the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs with the security they bring, the loss of health for ourselves or for family members, the loss of joy in our lives because of the stresses that surround us. We gather up the pain of the past and we offer it to you, O God, asking that into our open hands you will place the gift of peace.

Please take a moment to remember the losses in the silence of your hearts....

Leader: God of mystery, we turn our hearts to you. We come before you in need of peace, grateful for the mystery of life and keenly aware of your promises of guidance and protection.

People: Thank you for the gift of the mystery of life and the freedom to choose your way. When the pain of the past is still heavy today, remind us of your constant presence. Comfort us, God of peace, and draw near!

SONG

“Come, Come, Emmanuel”

No. 91

(Pastor Ivan will sing the first time through. Please join for three repetitions.) *Glory to God*

THIRD CANDLE: JOY

Leader: We light the third candle, the candle of joy, in full awareness that joy is hard to come by for those who experience a loss of direction in their lives.

Please take a moment to consider your wanderings in the silence of your hearts....

Leader: God of the Exodus, you led Moses and your people through the wilderness to a new land. We want so much to have a clear sense of direction, to know where we are and where we ought to be headed. But doubt and questions remain. You are our wisdom and our guide, help us trust in your presence. Your words to us are clear: “Do not fear, I go before you.”

People: Thank you for your guidance even when we feel lost. Strengthen our confidence in your direction and reassure us when we are on the right path. Take all that is lost in us and bring it home with you. Comfort us, God of the wild places, and draw near!

SONG

“Come, Come, Emmanuel”

No. 91

(Pastor Ivan will sing the first time through. Please join for three repetitions.) *Glory to God*

FOURTH CANDLE: LOVE

Leader: The fourth candle we light as a sign of love that the Christmas story offers to us. The incarnation of God in Jesus Christ is a sign that God shares our life, our pain, and our suffering. This is true love.

Please take a moment to breathe in this love...

Leader: O God, your presence with us is comfort and strength when we are in places of deep shadow. Lift up our hearts to be confident in your care. Guide us when we cannot see the way. Teach us to know that a shadow is only a shadow, because the light of eternal goodness shines behind the object of our fears.

People: Thank you for love. Help us to trust it and enable us to grow in the power of love. May our lives bring comfort and encouragement to others. Comfort us, God of Love, and draw near!

SONG

“Come, Come, Emmanuel”

No. 91

(Pastor Ivan will sing the first time through. Please join for three repetitions.) *Glory to God*

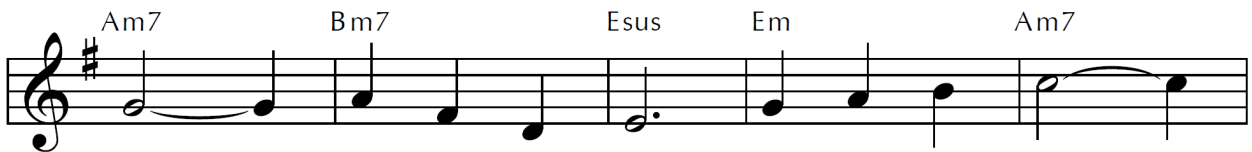
Pastor: Each of us comes bearing our own hurts, sorrows, broken places. God loves each of us deeply and wants to carry our pain. God waits patiently, gently calling out: “Give me your pain, come to me... all who labor and are heavy laden, I will refresh you!”

I invite each of you to come forward and light a candle for yourself or for a loved one and leave it on the table so we might all see it and bear witness. As you light the candle, remember that it is God in Christ who is the light. The Gospel of John 1:4-5 says “What came into being through the Word was life, and the life was the light for all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness doesn’t extinguish the light.”

Gracious God, as we go from this place, we trust in your company along our way. Wrap your everlasting arms around us; swaddle us in the security of your love; comfort us with the silence of your quiet breath; brighten our path with the light of your presence. Then, send us into the world.



1 Long-ing for light, we wait in dark-ness. Long-ing for
 2 Long-ing for peace, our world is trou-bled. Long-ing for
 3 Long-ing for food, man - y are hun - gry. Long-ing for
 4 Long-ing for shel - ter, man - y are home-less. Long-ing for
 5 Man - y the gifts, man - y the peo - ple, man - y the



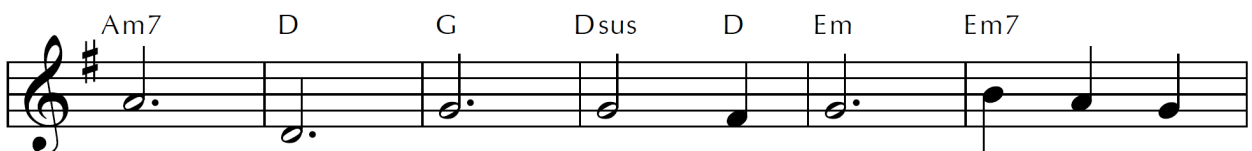
truth, we turn to you. Make us your own,
 hope, man - y de - spair. Your word a - lone
 wa - ter, man - y still thirst. Make us your bread,
 warmth, man - y are cold. Make us your build - ing,
 hearts that yearn to be - long. Let us be ser - vants



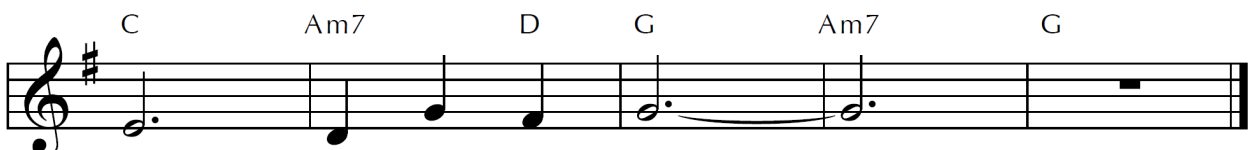
your ho - ly peo - ple, light for the world to see.
 has power to save us. Make us your liv - ing voice.
 bro - ken for oth - ers, shared un - til all are fed.
 shel - ter - ing oth - ers, walls made of liv - ing stone.
 to one an - oth - er, mak - ing your king - dom come.



Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the



dark - ness. Christ, be our light! Shine in your



church gath - ered to - day.

BENEDICTION

Pastor Ivan N. Herman

Pastor: May the power and the mystery go before us, to show us the way, shine above us to lighten our world, lie beneath us to bear us up, walk with us to give us companionship, and glow and flow within us to bring us joy.

POSTLUDE

“Still, Still, Still”

setting by Paul Manz

German Carol

Rick Schlosser

This service was adapted from three resources. The first was a service created by Heather Hill, Rector of All Saints Episcopal Church in Parma, Ohio. She has given permission for others to use it. The original service was shared to the Young Clergy Women International Magazine in 2012 and can be found at <https://youngclergywomen.org/blue-christmas-service-when-christmas-hurts/>. The second service resource was by shared by Jean Givens, a Presbyterian Health Network leadership team member. The service was held at First Presbyterian Church, Kalamazoo, Michigan and led by a team of parish nurses. The original service can be found at <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/blue-christmas-service-wholeness-and-healing/>. Some of the liturgy was also provided by *The Presbyterian Outlook* for a Blue Christmas service written by Rev. Christine Chakoian, pastor/head of staff at Westwood Presbyterian Church, Los Angeles, CA in 2022.

Audio/Video: ???

You are Invited to Join Christmas Eve Worship Services

SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP

10:00 a.m.

Join in worship as we light the fourth Advent candle and enjoy music from the Sanctuary Choir & Mission Bells.

FAMILY CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

5:00 p.m.

Children help fill the Bethlehem village with nativity characters while we hear the Christmas story through carols, Scripture, and songs from the Sanctuary Choir.

All children receive a special gift!

CANDLELIGHT COMMUNION SERVICE

11:00 p.m.

Celebrate Christmas with the Lord's Supper, reading the Christmas Story, and music from Hannah Ludwig, mezzo-soprano.

All services will be livestreamed at

<https://www.youtube.com/@carmichaelpres>



CARMICHAEL
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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