

**First United Church of Oak Park**  
**Blue Christmas Worship - A Service of Healing**



**Thursday December 13, 2018 at 7:00 pm**

**GATHERING MUSIC**

**WELCOME**

**A BLUE CHRISTMAS POEM**

## **CALL TO WORSHIP**

Gracious God, we acknowledge that this is a season of joy and celebration for many people as we prepare for the birth of Jesus. But we also acknowledge that these celebrations can ring hollow in our hearts if we are experiencing grief, depression, or pain. We may not feel like joining in the celebration if we are walking in sadness or distress. There are many kinds of losses that trouble us in these days of darkness. Speak to us O God, speak to us words of comfort, healing, and restoration. Give us hope.

**Come, Holy Spirit, be present with us in our afflictions. Reach into our hearts, heal and restore us. Where we are hurting, comfort us. And where we are experiencing sorrow, show us compassion. Emmanuel, God be with us.**

## **SONG – *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (v1)***

"O come, O come Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel that mourns in lonely exile here, until the child of God appear. Rejoice. Rejoice. Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel."

## **OPENING PRAYER**

### **LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES**

#### **FIRST CANDLE – GRIEF:**

We light the first candle to share our grief: little griefs and large griefs, grief over loved ones who have died, over relationships that have ended or are strained, retirement, children moving away, children getting married, over the myriad of losses we have experienced. Often it is during these special holiday times, these times that are filled with memories, that we feel most deeply the absence of those people or things that we have loved and lost. May this candle bring to light our grief.

#### ***Silent meditation***

#### ***Scripture – John 11:32-35***

When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep.

#### ***Sing "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" (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.

#### **SECOND CANDLE – PAIN:**

We light the second candle to acknowledge our pain: the pain of physical ailments, of addiction, the pain of mental illness, the pain of troubled relationships, the pain and debilitating isolation of depression or anxiety – all the pain and burdens that we experience. In the midst of the joy of the Christmas season,

we sometimes feel the need to hide the pain that we feel, so that we won't burden others. But our pain is nothing to be ashamed of. May this candle bring light to our pain.

***Silent meditation***

***Scripture – Matthew 11:28-29***

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, 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.

***Sing "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" (v. 4)***

O come, O shoot of Jesse, free your own from Satan's tyranny,  
from depths of hell your people save, and give them victory o'er the grave.  
Rejoice. Rejoice. Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

**THIRD CANDLE – FEARS:**

We light the third candle to name our fears: fears of uncertainty, fears of being alone; fears of those who are not like us or whom we don't understand; fears of change or stagnation, fears of what the future may or may not hold – all the fears that hold us back from living life to the fullest. Just as the shepherds, wise men, King Herod, Mary, and Joseph were filled with fear that first Christmas, so we too live in a world and a time that is filled with fear. May this candle bring to light our fears.

***Silent meditation***

***Scripture – Isaiah 41: 8-10***

But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off"; do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.

***Sing "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" (v. 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.

**FOURTH CANDLE – STRUGGLES:**

We light the fourth candle to recognize the struggles of our world: the struggles of those who suffer the effects of war; the struggles of those who are in need of food and shelter; the struggles of those who are fighting to survive diseases and illnesses like cancer; the struggles of those who long for freedom from oppression; the struggles of those who are experiencing all that we have already named. And our shared struggle of a world desperately in need of God's promised realm of peace. May this candle bring to light our struggles.

***Silent meditation***

**Scripture – Revelation 21: 1-6a**

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.” And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new. “Also, he said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.” Then he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

**Sing "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" (v. 7)**

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.

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

Communal Response: **God, grant us peace.**

**CLOSING SONG – “Stay with Me”**

Stay with me, re - main here with me,  
watch and pray, watch and pray.

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**BLESSING**

It is night, the night is for stillness. Let us be still in the presence of God. It is night after a long day. What has been done has been done. What has not been done has not been done. Let it be. The night is dark. Let our fears of the darkness, of the world, and of our lives rest in you. The night is quiet. Let the quietness of your peace enfold us, and all dear to us, and all without peace. The night heralds the dawn. Let us look expectantly to a new day and new possibilities. **AMEN.**

Following the service, our pastoral staff and deacons are available if you would like someone to talk to, pray with, pray for you, or if you would like a blessing.