

Middlebury Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
December 21, 2024
Longest Night

*all those who are able please stand

Our worship begins with the Prelude.

Please be mindful of those who wish to spend this time in prayer

PRELUDE

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

arr. Jay Rouse

CALL TO WORSHIP

Liturgist

Leader: The people who have walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who lived in a land of deep shadows a light has shone.

People: For the yoke that was weighing upon them, and the burden upon their shoulders, you have broken in pieces, O God.

Leader: By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

People: O come, Emmanuel, God-with-us. Come and shed your light into the deep shadows of our lives and lead us in the way of peace.

***HYMN**

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

Pilgrim Hymnal (Red) #129

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: God of mercy, hear our prayer in this Advent season for ourselves, our friends, and our families who feel loss, joy, sadness, compassion, frustration, peace, despair, stress. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow, and peace for our past and future. We ask these things in the name of

your Son, Jesus Christ, who shares our life in joy and sorrow, death and new birth, despair and promise.

People: Amen.

READINGS OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURE

Psalm 139:1-18, 23-24

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.

You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely.

You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.

Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,

even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.

If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night,"

even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.

My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.

How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

I try to count them—they are more than the sand; I come to the end—I am still with you.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts.

See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

John 1:1-14

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 did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He

came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

MEDITATION

The Rev. Katrina Manzi

ANTHEM

He Comes (Advent)

Charlotte Lee/D. Wagner

Adult Choir

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen. [We use "Father" and "trespasses," but please use whatever words bring you closest to God.]

TIME FOR PERSONAL PRAYER, REMEMBRANCE, AND BLESSING

During this time, there are many ways to feel the Holy Spirit's presence. You may light a candle in memory of a loved one, receive a blessing from the pastor, or silently listen to the music and pray.

***HYMN**

Silent Night, Holy Night

Pilgrim Hymnal (Red) #138

***BENEDICTION**

POSTLUDE

Silent Night

arr. Brian Buda

“Advent” by Charlotte Lee

He comes to heal the broken hearted, and those who thought that hope was gone.

To those who grieve, He is a refuge; to those who despair, He brings the dawn.

He comes to dry the tears of orphans and bless the lonely and oppressed.

He comes to feed the hungry pilgrims and helps the weary find their rest.

He comes to light a world of darkness, to cast all bitterness away.
He comes to live with us forever. He comes to be born in us today.



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