

*A Service of
Remembrance
and
Hope*

DECEMBER 9, 2020

7 P.M.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
444 EAST BROAD STREET • COLUMBUS, OHIO 43215

A SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE AND HOPE

Of the many events throughout any year that renew our sense of loss, the approaching holiday season is perhaps the most difficult. Everywhere we turn in our daily life we see the atmosphere of the Christmas season conveying a message of joy. This year has been especially challenging for all of us. Even more so for those of us who carry the grief of loss and sadness during this time.

We hear Christmas music all around us. We are inundated with commercials and gift giving. Many people are suffering the anguish of broken relationships; the insecurity of employment and unemployment; the exhaustion of ill health; the hurting of solitude; the loss of a parent; the unimaginable loss of a child; the loneliness of no longer having a beloved spouse to share each day; the loss of a sibling, the loss of a dear friend; the loss of their beloved family pet and loyal companion; the loss of so many lives to the global pandemic that plagues us; all of which can contribute to a feeling of being heavy hearted in the midst of a society around us who feel merry as they celebrate the season. There are years when we hurt terribly as the holidays approach and we can't display the same festive spirit as others appear to do.

During these times we need to make the space and take the time to acknowledge our sadness and concern. There is comfort in knowing we are not alone. For all these reasons, we invite you participate and join in sharing prayers, Scripture, and music. Please join us for this special service to feel God's presence in your time of darkness and to be comforted knowing that you are not alone, and that God's Word is ever-present to shine light into our lives.

We pray that you will find hope and comfort in knowing that you are not alone.

We gather in silence. At the sound of a bell, the service will begin.

PRELUDE

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Veni Emmanuel

GATHERING

Leader: Come to us this night, O God.

People: Come to us with light.

L: Speak to us this night, O God.

P: Speak to us your truth.

L: Dwell with us this night, O God.

P: Dwell with us in love.

WELCOME

CONFESSION OF OUR NEED FOR THE PRESENCE OF GOD

L: We gather here in your presence, God.

P: In our need and bringing with us the needs of the world.

L: We come to you, for you come to us in Jesus.

P: And you know by experience what human life is like.

L: We come with our faith and with our doubts.

P: We come with our hopes and our fears.

L: We come as we are, because you invite us to come.

P: And you have promised to never turn us away.

L: Loving God, the comfort of all who sorrow, the strength of all who suffer: accept our prayers, and to those who seek healing, grant the power of your grace, that the weak may be strengthened, sickness turned to health, the dying made whole in your love, and sorrow turned into joy; through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

L: God our healer, whose mercy is like a refining fire: by the lovingkindness of Jesus, heal us and those for whom we pray; that being renewed by you, we may witness your wholeness to our broken world; through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Spirit. **Amen.**

MUSIC

“O come, O come, Emmanuel”

Veni Emmanuel

LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE

L: Light and peace to you in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The first candle is lighted.

L: We light the first candle to remember those persons who have been loved and lost. We pause to remember their names, their faces, their voices. We give thanks for the memory that bind them to us this season that anticipates Christ.

P: May the love of Christ embrace all as one.

The second candle is lighted.

L: We light the second candle to redeem pain and loss—the loss of relationships, the loss of health, the loss of jobs, the loss of confidence, and the loss of dreams. As we gather up the pain of the past, we offer it to you, O God, asking that into our welcome hearts and open hands, you place the gifts of peace and hope.

P: Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into your future.

The third candle is lighted.

L: We light the third candle to remember our own pain, sorrows and questions. We pause and remember that past weeks, months, and for some of us, years of grief, anxiety, or uncertainty. We remember the poignancy of memories, the grief, the sadness, the hurts, and the pain of reflecting on our own mortality.

P: Let us remember that dawn defeats darkness.

The fourth candle is lighted.

L: The fourth candle is lit to remember our faith and the gift of hope that God offers to us in the Christmas story. We remember that God, who shares our life, promises us a place and time of no more pain and suffering.

P: Let us remember the One who shows the way and who goes with us into our tomorrows.

MUSIC

“O come, thou Wisdom from on high”

Veni Emmanuel

HEBREW SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 49:14–16a

The LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on the suffering ones. But Zion said, “The LORD has forsaken me, my LORD has forgotten me.” Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child in her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands.

PSALTER

Psalm 86:1–7 (*read responsively by verse*)

L: Incline your ear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.

P: Preserve my life, for I am devoted to you; save your servant who trusts in you.

L: You are my God; be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do I cry all day long.

P: Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

L: For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call on you.

P: Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; listen to my cry of supplication.

L: In the day of my trouble I call on you,

P: for you will answer me.

MUSIC

“O come, O come, thou Lord of might”

Veni Emmanuel

GOSPEL READING

Matthew 5:1–10

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

‘Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

‘Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

‘Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

‘Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

LITANY OF HEALING

L: Let us name before God those for whom we offer our prayers. (*silence*)

God of creative love, your will for all people is health and salvation;

P: We praise you and thank you, O God.

L: Jesus, beloved child of God and God with Us, you came that we might have life, and might have it more abundantly;

P: We praise you and thank you, O God.

L: God the Holy Spirit, you make our bodies the temple of your presence;

P: We praise you and thank you, O God.

L: Holy Trinity, one God, in you we live and move and have our being;

P: We praise you and thank you, O God.

L: God, grant your healing grace to all who are sick, injured, or differently abled, that they may be made whole;

P: Hear us, O God of life.

L: Grant to all who seek your guidance, and to all who are lonely, anxious, or despondent, a knowledge of your will and an awareness of your presence;

P: Hear us, O God of life.

L: Mend broken relationships and restore those in emotional distress to soundness of mind and serenity of spirit;

P: Hear us, O God of life.

L: Bless physicians, nurses and all others who minister to the suffering, granting them wisdom and skill, sympathy and patience;

P: Hear us, O God of life.

L: Grant to the dying peace and a holy death and uphold by the grace and consolation of your Holy Spirit those who are bereaved:

P: Hear us, O God of life.

L: Restore to wholeness whatever is broken by human sin, in our lives, in our nation, and in the world:

P: Hear us, O God of life.

L: You are the God who does wonders:

P: You have declared your power among the peoples.

L: With you, O God, is the well of life:

P: And in your light we see light.

L: Hear us, O God of life:

P: Heal us and make us whole.

L: O God, accept the prayers of your people; in the multitude of your mercies look with compassion upon us and all who turn to you for help; for you are gracious, O lover of souls, to you we give glory now and for ever. **Amen.**

CONFESSION OF NEED

L: Let us confess our need for God's healing grace. (*silence*)

P: Compassionate God, we confess our weaknesses and our need for your strengthening touch. We confess that some illnesses stem from our own fault, while others are beyond our control. We turn to you, source of life, and ask in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ for the gifts of true healing and life in you. Amen.

L: May the God of love visit you in your times of trial and weakness, and raise you to newness of life, through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

MUSIC

“O come, thou Branch of Jesse's tree”

Veni Emmanuel

OFFERING OF PRAYERS AND ANOINTING

L: The ministry of Jesus invites us to new life in God and with each other. In the laying on of hands and anointing we proclaim the Good News that God desires us to be healthy and one in the body of Christ. You are invited to offer yourself, whatever your sickness of spirit, mind, or body, and ask for healing and wholeness in the Name of the holy and undivided Trinity.

L: Let us pray. Gracious God, source of all healing, in Jesus Christ you heal the sick and mend the broken. We bless you for this oil pressed from the fruits of the earth, given to us as a sign of healing and forgiveness, and of the fullness of life you give. By your Spirit, come upon all who receive this ministry of compassion that they may know your healing touch and be made whole, to the glory of Jesus Christ our redeemer. **Amen.**

During this time, Ministers virtually anoint you with oil as a sign of healing. We also light votive candles as remembrances or prayers. We invite you to observe this prayer space at home and light a candle or candles for your prayers, concerns, sadnesses, wishes, and hopes.

MUSIC DURING ANOINTING

“O come, thou Key of David, come”

Veni Emmanuel

“O come, thou Dayspring from on high”

Veni Emmanuel

“O come, Desire of nations, come”

Veni Emmanuel

CLOSING PRAYER

L: Let us pray.

P: Be present, O merciful God, and protect us through the house of this night, so that we who are wearied by the changes and chances of this life may rest in your eternal changelessness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying and soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love’s sake. Amen.

BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

POSTLUDE

How Can I Keep From Singing?

Robert Lowry
arr. John Carter

You are invited to depart in silence.

We thank you for attending this service, and we wish you peace and hope in this season and throughout the year.

We invite you to join us on YouTube or Facebook for worship during Advent and Christmas.

Sunday Worship at 9 and 11 a.m.

Christmas Eve – 3 p.m., 7:30 p.m., and 11 p.m.

www.first-church.org/watchourservices.aspx

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Welcome Statement

You are welcomed, affirmed, and loved here; our faith informs us that you are a child of a loving God. Your characteristics and gifts will enrich our congregation. In this community, you will be celebrated, embraced, and honored, no matter how you identify or how your identity may evolve. Wherever you are on your faith journey, we invite you to join us in our diverse yet united experience.

First Church is a Faith Community

- † Called together by God, the Creator and Sustainer of life, to worship, pray and serve;
- † Led by Jesus Christ, our Teacher and Savior, to learn the faith and welcome all God's children;
- † Empowered by the Holy Spirit to witness to God's love and justice between ourselves, and throughout the world.

Open and Affirming Statement

We, the members of First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, welcome and affirm all. We believe we are all created in God's image and called to love our neighbors as Jesus loves us. We believe we are many members, but one body in Christ, called to unite all people in God's love. We are a community seeking God's presence and love in our lives. We seek to unite persons of all ages, races, nationalities, ethnicities, sexual orientations, sexes, gender identities and expressions, family structures, mental, intellectual and physical conditions, economic circumstances, political, theological and faith backgrounds. Together in our diversity, and being empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit, we will "do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God." (Micah 6:8)

—Adopted September 8, 2002 by the congregation
Revisions adopted January 27, 2019 by the congregation



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST
God is still speaking.



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
444 EAST BROAD STREET, COLUMBUS, OHIO 43215-3885
PHONE: 614.228.1741 FAX: 614.461.1741
WWW.FIRST-CHURCH.ORG