

Woodbury
United Methodist Church



Woodbury United Methodist Church
Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors
Love Spoken Here!
4 Church Street, Woodbury, CT 06798
(203) 263-4775 • www.woodburyumc.net



CLOSE to
HOME

Tuesday, December 21, 2021

Woodbury United Methodist Church

December 21, 2021 Blue Christmas / Longest Night

*Please stand as you are able.

PRELUDE Christopher Shay

GREETING Pastor Michael Cobb

CALL TO WORSHIP

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 is Life, and this Life is the Light of the world. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

OPENING HYMN #221 *In the Bleak Midwinter* (UM Hymnal)

PSALM 22 led by Rynn Naylor
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?

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

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

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

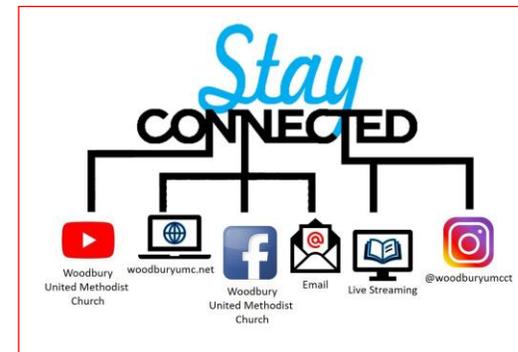
PSALM 23 (unison) led by Rynn Naylor
The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff— they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely

Mission Statement

We are a welcoming Christian fellowship who celebrate and share God's love with everyone. We seek a closer relationship with Jesus Christ. Inspired by His example, we strive to be God's hands in this world. Empowered by God's word, we proclaim the Gospel and serve through worship, study, mission, and community support.

Blue Christmas is designed as a contemplative worship experience. In order to maintain a meditative mood, we do not collect an offering as a part of this service.

If you like, you can make any gift at the back of the sanctuary on your way out, or make a donation anytime online at WoodburyUMC.net. All gifts received go to strengthen the ministries of this congregation. We are grateful for your support of our shared work, both within the church and in the greater Woodbury community.



A DIGITAL BLESSING

Pull out your cell phone. Scroll through the last 10-20 people you have called or texted. Take a few moments to pause over each name, remembering each individual and what they might be carrying on this day. Say a brief prayer for them and remember that you are not alone.

HYMN # 239

Silent Night, Holy Night

UM Hymnal

BENEDICTION

Rev. Cobb

As you leave this service, remember – tomorrow, a new day is dawning! Despite what we see and hear in the world around us, the sunrise is coming. When it comes, it will break through the darkness of our world— darkness caused by violence and death and hunger and despair. And all those who now sit huddled in the shadows will be able to rise and walk with confidence in the light. So go from here with courage and hope, to love and serve the Lord. And remember that here in God’s house, all are welcomed—so come back soon. In the name of our Foundation—God, Spirit, and Son—go in peace. Dawn is coming. Amen.

This service concludes in silence. You are welcome to remain as long as you like, leaving when you are ready. The pastor will remain at the back of the church to offer personal prayer.

Elements of this service may be taken or adapted from Adapted from a prayer by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org or UMC Discipleship.org. Used by permission.

We would like to take the time to thank those individuals that had helped with tonight’s worship service: *Christopher Shay*, Minister of Music; *Barbara Etcheto* and *Rynn Naylor*, Liturgists and Readers; *Barbara Hunt* and *Meg Temple*, Greeters.

Please feel free to take your Christmas Eve Service insert and share it with family and friends. We hope to see you at one of those services.

goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever and ever.

A LITANY FOR LOSSES

As we gather our hearts in this space, you are invited to close your eyes and take a deep breath. Inhale what is good. Exhale what is hurting. Listen now to this honest reflection, and allow this honesty to mark this space as one set apart.

We are raw nerves, exposed and tender. We are weary bones, hunched and fragile. We are silent prayers, lips saying your name. We are wedding rings we can’t take off, even though time has passed. We are the same pew, but it feels different now. We are a brave face when we have to be strong. We are tears in the shower when grief roars its head. We are setting the table, but there are empty seats. We are stuck in the swell, caught in the storm. We are moving on, caught in our guilt. We are okay some days, but some days we’re not. We are familiar with the night, we know it by name. We are night-walkers, dream-makers, star-chasers. We are close to home, but home has changed. We are close to the surface, but the waters are rising. We are all of this, plus everything else, and we are here. We are here. Grief is here. God is here. The night is here. And all of this is true, and we are not alone. Take my hand. Take these words. Let them be your life raft. Let this be the longest night, and let it be whatever you need it to be. We are here. Grief is here. God is here. Take what you need. Amen.

MUSICAL INTERLUDE

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

Venetia and Morgan Phillipe

WE LISTEN FOR THE WORD OF GOD

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 40:21-31

led by Barbara Etcheto

Written during the exile, when many of the Israelites were captives in a foreign land, this is a text of lament, asking for God’s comfort.

Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in; who brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing. Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble. To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal?

says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing. Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, ‘My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God’? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the Lord 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.

A REFLECTION FOR THE LONGEST NIGHT

WE RESPOND IN FAITH

PRAYER OF THE PEOPLE

Rynn Naylor

God who always welcomes us home—tonight is a long night. We gather together heavy with prayer concerns. They tumble out of our mouths, they saturate every word we sing, they lay over us like a quilt, weighing on our spirits. We are a million combinations of weary and sad, lonely and grieving, angry and hurt. It is obvious that we need you, so together we sing. . .

Refrain: “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel / shall come to you, O Israel.

Barbara Etcheto

God, we need you in the messy middles, in the unclear paths forward, the transition seasons, and the splinterings of what once was. God, we need you in the grieving places, in the dining rooms with empty chairs, in the empty wombs, and in the dark of the tomb. God, we need you in our failed dreams, in shame that rises quickly, in the unknown next steps, in the discernment that is always easier said than done. And so we sing. . .

Refrain: “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel / shall come to you, O Israel.

PASTORAL PRAYER

Rev. Cobb

O come, Emmanuel. Flood our grieving hearts. Pour out your Spirit on this world. Where there is suffering, loneliness, poverty, abuse, addiction,

depression—be there. Be all there. Wrap your arms around those hurting places, and carry us to your promised day. Until then, we will continue to sing. . .

Refrain: “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel / shall come to you, O Israel.

Now using the words your son taught us to pray, we say together,

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. Amen.

WE GO FORTH IN JOY

Communal Sending | “We See One Another”

“Take a few moments to look around the room at each person present. Look into your neighbor’s eyes, acknowledging that we can never fully know what it is that each of us carry. Scan the room and find another person to look eyes with, gazing upon them with care and empathy. For a moment, hold them in your heart. Now continue to scan the faces in this room as we speak together this litany. Repeat after me. . .”

One: We are here.

All: We are here.

One: I see you and your pain.

All: I see you and your pain.

One: I see you and your hope.

All: I see you and your hope.

One: You are my neighbor.

All: You are my neighbor.

One: We belong to one another.

All: We belong to one another.

One: We are not in this alone.

All: We are not in this alone.

One: Thanks be to God for the love that binds us.

All: Thanks be to God for the love that binds us.

One: Amen.