

TOPSAIL UNITED CHURCH
"INCREASING THE LIGHT"
("Longest Night Service")

December 21st, 2019 - 7:00 pm

Welcome to this service of quiet reflection, comfort and reassurance. This service is time to "step back" from all the rush of Christmas preparations and reflect and remember God's gift of family and friends as we await the coming of Christ.

***It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold,
"Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heaven's all gracious King!"
The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.***

PRELUDE: Harp Music

WORDS OF WELCOME & INTRODUCTION OF SERVICE:

CALL TO WORSHIP:

One: This is a time of expectation; a season when everything around us seems to be alight with anticipation. We gather in quiet hope like the stars that shine with beauty, unvoiced and undemanding, whose depth is seen most clearly in the darkest of nights.

All: **The Light of all lights is the still flame within warming us, keeping us, and making each new day possible.**

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE
(BEGINNING THE INCREASING OF THE LIGHT)

OPENING PRAYER:

As starlight pierces through the shadows of the deepest night, may Love reveal its presence which is always and everywhere with us. As rain falls from the sky quenching the earth and renewing all life, may love restore our thirsty spirits. As tears spring warm into our eyes spilling down our cheeks and toward our hearts may Love have its healing way in us. We wait with hopeful hearts and, as we gather, may we feel the increasing light of God's love surrounding us. Amen.

FIRST READING: Luke 2: 1-7

BRIEF MEDITATION:

MOMENT OF SILENCE
A CANDLE IS LIT INCREASING THE LIGHT

SONG: #278 "In The Quiet Curve of Evening"

SECOND READING: Luke 6: 17-23

BRIEF MEDITATION:

MOMENT OF SILENCE
A CANDLE IS LIT INCREASING THE LIGHT

HARP SELECTIONS: CBS Harp circle

THIRD READING: Psalm 22: 1-11

BRIEF MEDITATION:

MOMENT OF SILENCE
A CANDLE IS LIT INCREASING THE LIGHT

VIOLIN SOLO: Rachael Moores

FOURTH READING: Matthew 11: 28-29

BRIEF MEDITATION:

MOMENT OF SILENCE
A CANDLE IS LIT INCREASING THE LIGHT

HARP SOLO: "Ed Kavanagh"

FIFTH READING: Romans 8: 35, 38-39

BRIEF MEDITATION:

MOMENT OF SILENCE
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MUSICAL SELECTION: Members of the Aurora Choir

LORD'S PRAYER:

CONGREGATIONAL CANDLE LIGHTING

SONG: #67 "Silent Night"

COMMISSIONING & BENEDICTION:

(Music Leaders: Ed Kavanagh, Rachael Moores, Beth & Andrew Cranston & members of the Aurora Choir & the CBS Harp Circle)

Meditation 1

Luke 2: 1-7

2In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Meditation based on Luke 2: 1-7:

With this story we remember that Jesus himself was no stranger to being a stranger, and outsider, a refugee. He knew what it felt like to be unwelcome - as a child and as an adult. In his own life, he had the experience of having no place to call home, no security, little comfort.

After a prayer we will have a moment of silence and a candle lit for those who feel adrift or alone.

Let us pray: **Jesus, you know what it is like to feel adrift or alone. Guide those who are far from home, those who feel strangers, into your presence where they will know that they genuinely belong to God's family as beloved daughters and sons. Amen.**

Light Candle

Meditation 2

Luke 6: 17-23

¹⁷He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. ¹⁸They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. ¹⁹And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

²⁰Then he looked up at his disciples and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. ²¹"Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. ²²"Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. ²³Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

Meditation based on Luke 6: 17-23:

This passage reminds us that Jesus was well aware of people's sorrows, yearnings, and sufferings. He offered a promise of healing and new hope for an abundant life for all those who have known pain. We have all known the pain of difficult times.

After a prayer we will have a moment of silence and a candle lit for these times as we increase the light of Christ's love to comfort us in our times of pain.

Let us pray: **Gracious God, you are the light of the world. Bring light and warmth to those who mourn. Fill those who hunger and thirst with good things. Bring comfort and peace to those who weep. Amen.**

Light Candle

Meditation 3

Psalm 22

¹My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

²O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest.

³Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.

⁴In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them.

⁵To you they cried, and were saved; in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.

⁶But I am a worm, and not human; scorned by others, and despised by the people.

⁷All who see me mock at me; they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;

⁸“Commit your cause to the LORD; let him deliver— let him rescue the one in whom he delights!”

⁹Yet it was you who took me from the womb; you kept me safe on my mother’s breast.

¹⁰On you I was cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me you have been my God.

¹¹Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

Meditation based on Psalm 22: 1-11

Even Jesus, whom we all know as Saviour and Friend, whom we call the Son of God, even Jesus knew the feeling of being abandoned by God, by the God he believed in, by the one he called *has Abba*. On the cross, he cried out to God, “Why have you forsaken me?” He knew what it felt like to be left alone, uncertain and afraid. We too, may have felt those times or we know of somebody else who has.

After a prayer we will have a moment of silence and a candle lit to remind us that in moments of fear and uncertainty we are safe under the shadow of Christ’s cross.

Let us pray: **Spirit of God, shine like this candle in the darkness, lighting the way for all who feel abandoned, forsaken, forgotten. Amen.**

Light Candle

Meditation 4

Matthew 11: 28-29

²⁸“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Meditation based on Matthew 11: 28-29

When burdens get piled on top of other burdens, the load can crush us. In his promise, Jesus offers to help us carry those burdens and responsibilities. Perhaps we have burdens that are particularly heavy right now. Maybe these words from the gospel of Matthew express exactly what we are feeling.

After a prayer we will have a moment of silence and a candle lit to know the assurance that others and Christ understands such burdens and helps carry the load.

Let us pray: **Friend Jesus, we do not ask you to take our whole burden onto your own shoulders. We only ask some help so that we can carry on when we feel weary enough to drop. Amen.**

Light Candle

Meditation 5

Romans 8: 35, 38-39

³⁵Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Meditation based on Romans 8: 35, 38-39

In this letter, Paul reminds us that nothing, absolutely nothing, can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus. In difficult times, we take comfort in this bold assurance. It may be all we have sometimes to hand on to, and yet it is a strong and precious truth.

After a prayer we will have a moment of silence and a candle lit as a bold reminder of God's promise to be with us in all times and all places.

Let us pray: **We thank you, gracious God, for your world of truth, that nothing - real or imagined, experienced or threatened - can separate us from your great love for us, as demonstrated in the gift of your child Jesus Christ whose birth, in the silence of this night, we remember in this season. Amen.**

Light Candle