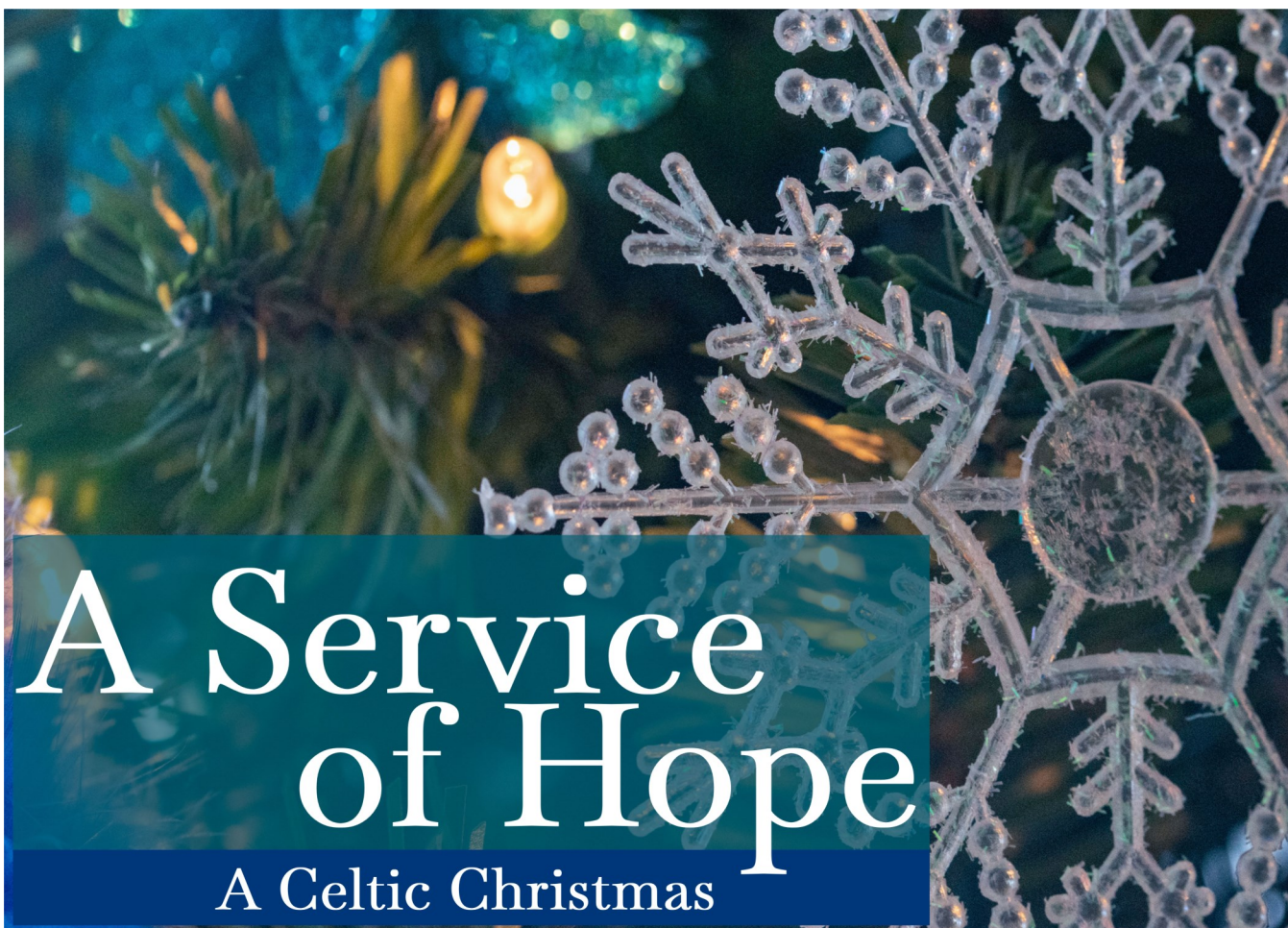


Celtic Service of Hope
TRINITY United Methodist Church

DECEMBER 18, 2022, 5 P.M.



CELTIC PRAYER

*Out of the silence at the beginning of time
you spoke the Word of life.
Out of the world's primeval darkness
you flooded the universe with light.
In the quiet of this place
in the dark of the night
I wait and watch.
In the stillness of my soul
and from its fathomless depths
the senses of my heart are awake to you.
For fresh surroundings of life
for new showings of light
I search in the silence of my spirit, O God.*

J Philip Newell
Celtic Benediction, 2000.

Prelude

Christmas Time is Here

Mendelson & Guaraldi

Welcome and Announcements

Eileen Gilmer The Advent season is one of wonder. For so many it is a time of hopeful anticipation. It is a season of promise. The longer nights and the gray clouds seem to provide the perfect background for the lights and the tinsel. The decorations are everywhere we turn. For so many, this is a time of hopeful anticipation. But for many of us, Christmas can be a harsh reminder of life that once was. We gather now to carve out a time of quiet reflection. We gather to shed tears if they come and to be reminded that we are not alone. We gather to be reminded that it is okay to mourn, even at Christmas.

Opening

Gilmer In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

People **All things were made by God, and without God nothing came to be.**

Gilmer What came to be through God was life, and this life was the light of the world.

People **The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.**

A Prayer for the Evening

Neil Hough In this season of anticipation, we seek the comfort of the Holy Spirit. We ask for Your blessing this night, for the pain at Christmas seems sharper. We remember the words of Jesus, who promised comfort to those who mourn. All around us are reminders of the joy that the world tells us we are supposed to be feeling. Forgive us, O God, for not always joining in the celebration with our whole hearts. Guide us now, O Holy One, that we may move in still small steps toward comfort. Help us to find healing in the midst of the pain, and order in the midst of chaos. Lighten our burden. Give us rest.

People **Amen.**

Psalter Reading

Psalm 22

Hough 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?

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

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

People **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.**

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

People **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.**

Responsive Prayer

Hough In You, gracious God, the widowed find a carer, the orphaned find a parent, the fearful find a friend.
In You, the wounded find a healer, the penitent find a pardoner, the burdened find a counselor.
In You, the miserly find a beggar, the despondent find a laughter-maker, the legalists find a rule-breaker.
In You, Jesus Christ, we meet our Maker, and our match.

And if some need to say, "Help me"
and if some need to say, "Save me"
and if some need to say, "Hold me"
and if some need to say, "Forgive me"
then let these be said now
in confidence
by us.

(Silence)

People O Christ, in whose heart is both welcome and warning, say to us, do to us, reveal within us the things that will make us whole.
**And we will wait;
and we will praise you. Amen.**

Musical Response

Alleluia (sung twice)

FWS 2014

Litany of Remembrance

The first candle is lighted.

Gilmer We light this first candle to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember clearly, their faces, their voices, their bodies. We embrace and give thanks for the memories that bind them to us in this season of expectation, when all Creation waits for the Light.

All **We remember them with love. May God's eternal love surround them.**

**O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here, until the son of God appear.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

The second candle is lighted.

Hough We light this second candle to remember the pain of loss: loss of relationships, loss of pets, loss of trust, loss of jobs, loss of health, loss of faith, the loss of joy. We acknowledge and embrace the pain of the past, O God, and we offer it to You, asking that into our wounded hearts and open hands You will place the gift of peace, shalom.

All **We remember that through You all things are possible.
Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into Your future.
O come, thou Wisdom from on high, who ordered all things mightily.**

To us the path of knowledge show, and teach us in her ways to go.

Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

The third candle is lighted.

Gilmer We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and for some of us years, that have been heavy with our burdens. We accept and lay before you, God, the sharpness of memory, the sadness and grief, the hurt and fear, the anger and pain.

We accept and lay before You the ways we feel we have fallen short, and the times we have spent blaming ourselves, and You, for all that we have suffered.
 We accept and lay before You the time we have walked alone, in darkness; and in knowledge of our own mortality.
All **We remember that though we have journeyed far, and that, while lost, we may have turned away from the light, the light itself has not failed.**
We remember that though winter is upon us and though the night is dark,
with the turning of the Wheel the dawn will come, and dawn defeats the darkness.
O come, thou day-spring, come; and cheer our spirits by thy advent here.
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

The fourth candle is lighted.

Hough We light this fourth candle to remember faith, the gift of light and hope that God offers to us in the stories of Hanukkah and of Christmas, which both also began in abandonment, insecurity, and humbleness, in a time of war and in a poor stable. We remember that the loving God who kept the light shining in the temple, and who came to share this life with us, promises us comfort and peace.

All **We remember the One who shares our burdens, who shows us the way to the Light, and who journeys with us into all our tomorrows.**
O come, desire of nations, bind in one the hearts of all mankind.
Bid then our sad, divisions cease, and be thyself our King of Peace.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.
Amen.

Music for Meditation

Still, Still, Still

Trad. Austrian

The Prayers of the People

Gilmer God of wisdom, we come to You this Advent Season tired, some in turmoil, and in pain. As the nights have grown longer, so has darkness grown and wrapped itself around our hearts. In this season of longest night, we ask Your healing blessings upon all we carry in our hearts -- sorrow we fear may never end, wounds we cannot even put into words. Lord, hear our prayer,

All **And in Your merciful love, answer.**

Gilmer God of mercy and compassion, there are those among us who are grieving over what might have been. Death or loss or terrible hurt has changed our experience of Christmas. We remember that once it was a special day for us, too, but someone or something precious has gone away from us in this life. We have lost a beloved, a companion, a job, a goal, a cause, a dream. We find ourselves adrift and feeling alone. We are weary from the journey, and we have found no room at the inn. We come to You seeking rest, and peace, and shelter from the storm. Lord, hear our prayer,

All **And in Your merciful love, answer.**

Gilmer God of grace, in the spirit of the season, grant us all that we need to comfort us as we journey through this Christmas season. We ask that You shelter and sustain all those of us, both here and throughout the world, who wander or want or weep or are heavy laden, that we may be lifted up in courage and journey on in your peace. Lord, hear our prayer,

All **And in Your merciful love, answer.**

Gilmer God of love, in this Advent Season we embrace and offer up to You all that used to be which is now lost to us, and cannot earthly be again. With celebration all around us, memories of what was and fears of what may be weigh heavy on our hearts. Please hold us close in your embrace, be near to us this night, until the light returns and morning comes. Lord, hear our prayer,

All **And in Your merciful love, answer.**

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

Concluding Prayers*Gilmer*

Let us pray.

*All***Another day will come, O God.****I know not what it may bring forth, but make me ready, God, for whatever it may be. If I am to stand up, help me to stand bravely.****If I am to sit still, help me to sit quietly.****If I am to lie low, help me to do it patiently.****And if I am to do nothing, help me do it gallantly.****Make these words more than words, and give me the Spirit of Your Peace. Amen.**

The days are short. The nights are long. Lord, Your universe mirrors the reality of our hearts, revealing Your gracious spirit that mourns with us in grief, cries with us in sorrow, sits with us in despair. You are not a distant God, removed from human pain, but a faithful companion closer to us than our tears. Help us to feel Your presence now as we remember and reflect, seeking Your healing touch and the hope that was promised and delivered in Jesus Christ, Your Son. Amen

†Charge and Blessing*Hough*

May Jesus, the life—the life that is light for all people— shine in your heart. No matter how small, no matter how dim, that light will stubbornly shine. And the darkness will not overcome it. Go in peace, with courage to face the coming days with hope, with God by your side.

*People***Amen.**

Liturgist

Neil Hough

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Keyboard

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Hammered Dulcimer

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