

# FRIENDSHIP UNITED METHODIST CHURCH BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

December 15, 2019

11:00 am



**Our Mission is:**

**Growing as Disciples - Serving as Friends.**

**Love All, Serve All, Follow One!**

**Friendship United Methodist Church**

**PO Box 72, Friendship, Maryland 20758**

**Blue Christmas Service of Healing & Comfort**  
**December 15, 2019 – 11:00 am**

**Words of Welcome**

**Prelude**      **Bells**      *“Carole of the Bells”*      *arr. D.E. Wagner*

**“Welcome to this Blue Christmas**, a time when we can acknowledge the “blue” feelings we have at Christmas time, the reasons for them, and offer them to God. This time has been called the “long dark night of the soul” and “the winter of our discontent” in which memories of past experiences and the pain of present experiences can become overwhelming. For some, Christmas Day is the most difficult. For others, Christmas Eve, or New Year’s Eve, or the beginning of another lonely New Year. In this service, we’ll have some singing appropriate to the Christmas Season, recognizing that this is not a season of joy for everyone. We will invite you to reflect on the pain, the loneliness, and the sadness you may feel and offer it to God for healing and transformation. We pray that you will find hope and comfort in knowing that you are not alone. Always remember that God knows your pain and loves you unconditionally.”

**LIGHTING OF THE THIRD ADVENT CANDLE:**

**Scripture Reading: Isaiah 35:10**      **Rev. Dr. Anne & Rev. Don Stewart**

L: We light this candle as a symbol of Christ the Way.

**All: May the Word sent from God through the prophets lead us to the way of salvation.**

**THE GATHERING OF OUR MORNING OFFERING**

**Offertory**      **Bells**      *“Joyful All Ye Nations Rise”*      *arr. D.R. Edwards*

**\*Response:** : “Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow”

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;*

*praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen*

**\*Prayer of Dedication & 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. Amen*

## Call to Worship

Paula Madden

### A Reading from the *Psalms, Psalm 22* as follows

L: 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?

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

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

**ALL:** *It was you who took me from the womb, you who kept me safe upon my mother's breast; since my mother bore me, you have been my God.*

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

**ALL:** *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!*

## Opening Prayer

Renee Knopp

God of abundant mercy, you have given us grace to pray with one heart and one voice, even though our hearts are broken and our voices tremble with grief and sorrow. Comfort, comfort Lord, your Holy people. Comfort those of us who sit in darkness, mourning beneath our sorrow's load. Speak to us of the peace that awaits us, of the balm of healing for our weary and wounded souls. We ask all this, trusting in the promise you have made to hear the prayers of two or three who have gathered in the Name of your Holy Child, Jesus.

**All: Amen.**

### \*Hymn

*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel #211*

**\*All: Reading of Psalm 23      A Psalm of David**

*<sup>1</sup> The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. <sup>2</sup> He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; <sup>3</sup> he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. <sup>4</sup> Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff— they comfort me. <sup>5</sup> You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. <sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.*

## Prayer

Linda Thompson

Holy and gracious God, you have searched us, you know us, and you know how difficult it is for us to be whole-hearted in our celebration of your Good News. There are parts of us which will not listen to the angel's song; we believe their tidings of great joy are for some people, but not for us. We grieve God, and we hold tight to our sorrows and expectations. So we confess, not our pain, but our embrace of it and our stubborn refusal of your grace and love. Forgive us God. Continue to love us we pray, and help us finally to hear your assurance that you travel beside us, and you will help carry our burdens. **Amen**

## Hymn

*In the Bleak Midwinter #221*

## Scripture Readings

Sam Guest / Linda Thompson

**Luke 6:17-23**      This passage reminds us that Jesus is aware of people's sorrows, yearnings and suffering – and offers a promise of the joy to come.

**Matthew 11:28-29**      When burdens get piled on top of other burdens, the load can crush us. In his promise, Jesus offers us help to carry our burdens and responsibilities.

**Revelation 21:1-7**      Our present world is not how God wants things to be. Those who weep now will not weep later. In this new heaven and new earth, there will be no more need for tears.

L: The word of God for the people of God

**All: Thanks be to God. Amen**

## Music

Bells

*"Go Tell It"*

*arr. T. Waldrop*

## Invitation to Surrender

Paula Madden

## Candle Lighting Litany of Remembrance

Greg Kernan / Paula Madden

**Reader1:** God who is with us, in this season of looking forward, of anticipating the celebration of your Son's birth and return in glory, we often find ourselves uncomfortable, uneasy, worried and sad. The lights and gaiety, the music, the bright joy around us, often make us more unquiet, more out of step, feeling even more disconnected and different.

Some of these feelings come from false expectations. Others come from real situations and issues that face us or those we love. Some are from events we may influence and some are beyond our control. Trusting in your grace and provision, we name these situations and face the pain and dislocation they cause us. We claim your promise to companion us in bearing them. We claim your steadfast love for us, knowing you will help us find peace for our troubled spirits. We claim your wise and merciful power, that you will meet each need as is best for us.

**All:** *Come, holy Child of Bethlehem...love us.*

*Light candle –Bells: “Silent Night...*

**Reader2:** God of Light and Life, we light this candle for all those who are struggling with issues involving physical or mental health. We especially remember those struggling with cancer, depression, or thoughts of suicide. May its light remind us all of the healing available to us in Christ Jesus. Hear our prayers that anguish be minimized and your good plan fulfilled for each who suffer.

**All:** *Come, holy Child of Bethlehem...heal us.*

*Light candle –Bells: Holy Night...*

**Reader1:** We light this candle for all those who are struggling with issues involving financial concerns, job loss, seemingly insurmountable debt. May its light remind us all that you are the Great Provider, you will give us our daily bread. Empower us to take the steps we need to solve these problems. Draw us to the right people and programs to help us.

**All:** *Come, holy Child of Bethlehem...make us good stewards.*

*Light candle –Bells: All is calm...*

**Reader2:** We light this candle for all those who grieve. You know our deepest need, you understand our pain- lost dreams, lost opportunities, the separation of death. May its light remind us that we are not orphaned, we are not alone. Grant us grace that in pain we may find comfort, in sorrow hope, and in death resurrection.

**All:** *Come, holy Child of Bethlehem...comfort us.*

*Light candle –Bells: All is bright*

**Reader1:** We light this candle for all those who wrestle with the chains of addiction. Help us to name that which enslaves us and face it: food, alcohol, drugs, pornography, shopping, escapism, self-medication, and self-abuse in all its forms. May this candle bring your light to those secret, and not so secret, activities of imprisonment. Hear our prayers for deliverance and freedom; help us and those we love break the hold of these evils.

**All:** *Come, holy Child of Bethlehem...break our chains.*

*Light candle –Bells: Round yon Virgin*

**Reader2:** We light this candle for all those who are victims of violence and abuse in any of its forms. May its light lead us to peace, safety, and truth. Pour forth encouragement to claim your help in healing physically, emotionally and spiritually, to trust in your justice, to find assistance, to resist blaming ourselves, to be confident in the future you have planned for us, a future full of hope.

**All:** *Come, holy Child of Bethlehem...give us strength, empower us.*

*Light candle –Bells: Mother and child*

**Reader1:** We light this candle for all those who are experiencing the pain of broken relationships with family, children, spouses, and friends. May its light remind us of the pure communion you desire for all your creation. Our desire for this same communion makes estrangement so painful. Lead us to relinquish the hold broken relationships have on us, to forgive ourselves for our contribution to the breach, to forgive those who have hurt us, to take the steps to mend that relationship. Lord, we know that sometimes we suffer from a broken relationship with someone who is now dead. Help us to prayerfully examine, receive and extend forgiveness in that situation, that we may live again.

**All:** *Come, holy Child of Bethlehem...reconcile our relationships.*

*Light candle –Bells: Holy Infant*

**Reader2:** We light this candle for all those who are suffering the consequences of war, famine and unbridled disease. May its light remind us of your holy calling to everyone who believes you are the light of the world. Change the hearts of all who resort to violence, who seek revenge. Protect those who find themselves far from home serving their nations or the needy. We know you are in the midst of those in anguish and pray that your healing presence will be seen, felt, and embraced. Reveal to us how to join in your saving work- to make tangible gifts to alleviate suffering, to support those on the front lines of natural and manmade disasters, to pray unceasingly for peace in our families, our neighborhoods, our world.

**All: Come, holy Child of Bethlehem... end suffering and advance peace.**  
*Light candle –Bells: So tender and mild*

**Reader1:** We light this candle for all those who are estranged from you, who are besieged with doubts, who are overwhelmed by the world and do not claim your presence in their lives. We pray for them, and therefore ourselves, for we confess that each of us knows this condition. Lord, may the light of your love lead us all home to you.

**All: Come, holy Child of Bethlehem...shine your light on the last, the least, the lonely and the lost so we may gather them home to you, Lord Jesus.**

*Light candle – Bells:Sleep in heavenly peace...Sleep in heavenly peace"*

**Reader2:** We ask all these things in the unmatched name of Jesus who was, is and always will be.

**All: Amen.**

**A Moment for Silent Prayer and Reflection**

## **Litany of Affirmation**

L: God did not wait until the world was ready, until nations were at peace.

**All: God came when the heavens were unsteady and prisoners cried out for release.**

R: God did not wait for the perfect time.

**All: God came when the need was deep and great. God dined with sinners in all their grime; he turned water into wine.**

R: God did not wait till hearts were pure.

**All: In joy, God came to a tarnished world of sin and doubt; to a world of anguish and shame. God came in joy, and God's light never goes out.**

R: God came to a world which did not mesh; to heal its ill and shield its scorn.

**All: In the mystery of the Word made flesh, the maker of stars was born.**

R: We cannot wait till the world is whole, to raise our songs with joyful voice, to share our grief, to touch our pain.

**All: God came in grace, with love, Rejoice! Rejoice!**

**\*Closing Hymn**

*It Came Upon a Midnight Clear #218*

**Sending Forth**

**Postlude**

*Stephen Ministry is Christ centered one to one distinctively Christian care.  
No one ever has to walk alone....especially in the season of "joy".  
The Pastor can confidentially connect you with a Stephen Minister.*