

KIRK IN THE HILLS
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

A SERVICE OF COMFORT AND HOPE
DECEMBER 20, 2022



Weeping may linger for a night,
but joy comes in the morning.
– Psalm 30:5

We Seem to Forget ~ Ann Weems

What concerns me,
 what lies on my heart,
 is this:
That we in the church
 papered and programmed
 articulate and agenda-ed
are telling the faith story
 all wrong,
are telling it as though it happened two thousand
 years ago
or is going to happen
 as soon as the church budget is raised.
We seem to forget that Christ's name is Emmanuel,
 God With Us,
Not just when he sat among us
 but *now*,
 when we can feel the nailprints in his hands.

(Kneeling in Bethlehem, Westminster Press. 1987. Ann Weems)

A Service of Comfort & Hope
Tuesday, December 20, 2022

PRELUDE

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

In the darkest night

it is not possible to believe that light will come.

Because light has come before,

doesn't mean it will again.

Hold faith tonight

for those who see the darkness stretch before them –

and who know no other truth than that.

Hold faith tonight for those

whose barrenness prevails;

for those who are buffeted by despair;

for those who cannot breathe for fear.

Join your prayer to God's:

let there be light.

OPENING PRAYER

—Pause for silent reflection—

HYMN 89 – For You, O Lord, My Soul in Stillness Waits, v. 1-4

READING 1: Matthew 5:1-10

This familiar passage reveals that Jesus was well aware of people's sorrows, yearnings, and suffering—and offers a promise of something different.

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. And 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 the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

—a candle is lit and silence is kept—

HYMN 470 – There is a Longing in Our Hearts, O Lord

Refrain

There is a long-ing in our hearts, O Lord, for
 you to re-veal your-self to us.
 There is a long-ing in our hearts for love we
 on-ly find in you, our God.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, like this candle, bring warmth and light to those who mourn, who hunger and thirst, and who weep.

Soloist sings v. 1:

*For justice, for freedom, for mercy; hear our prayer.
 In sorrow, in grief; be near; hear our prayer, O God.*

READING 2: 1 Kings 19:8-12

This story reminds us that sometimes it is only in isolation that we can hear the still small voice through which God speaks to us.

The prophet Elijah fled for his life from Queen Jezebel. The scriptures describe his journey like this: {Elijah} got up and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. At that place he came to a cave and spent the night there. Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” He answered, “I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.”

He said, “Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.” Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind, and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake, and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire, and after the fire a sound of sheer silence.

When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

—a candle is lit and silence is kept—

Hymn 470 – There is a Longing in Our Hearts, O Lord, refrain

PRAYER: Spirit of God, calm the turmoil in our souls so that we can hear your still small voice.

Soloist sings v. 2:

*For wisdom, for courage, for comfort: hear our prayer.
In weakness, in fear: be near; hear our prayer O God.*

READING 3: Luke 13: 10-17

*Here we are reminded that Jesus sees, heals and defends the broken,
the bent, the lowly, and with a touch lifts them to life.*

Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment." When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the Sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured and not on the Sabbath day." But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it to water? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the Sabbath day?" When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame, and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things being done by him.

—a candle is lit and silence is kept—

HYMN 470 – There is a Longing in Our Hearts, O Lord, refrain

PRAYER: Set us free from the ailments that cripple us, we pray, set us free.

Soloist sings v. 3:

*For healing, for wholeness, for new life: hear our prayer.
In sickness, in death: be near; hear our prayer, O God.*

READING 4: Psalm 22:1-11 (My God, my God...)

Jesus quotes this psalm from the cross, revealing that even he knew the feeling of being abandoned by God, the God whom he had believed in, and of being left alone in his darkness.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

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

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

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

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

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

All who see me mock me; they sneer at me; they shake their heads;

"Commit your cause to the Lord; let him deliver—

let him rescue the one in whom he delights!"

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

On you I was cast from my birth, and 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.

—a candle is lit and silence is kept—

HYMN 470 – There is a Longing in Our Hearts, O Lord, refrain

PRAYER: Spirit of God, shine like this candle in the darkness, lighting the way for all who feel abandoned, forsaken, and forgotten. Amen.

Soloist sings v. 4:

*Lord save us, take pity, Light in our darkness.
We call you; we wait: be near; hear our prayer, O God.*

READING 5: Psalm 139: 1-12

*Finally, the psalmist assures us that there are no depths or heights
we can go to where God is not with us.*

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.
Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.
If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and night wraps itself around me,"
even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

— a candle is lit and silence is kept —

ANOINTING AND SHARING OF BURDENS

During the musical meditation, you may come forward light a candle for whatever grief, sorrow or hope you hold in your heart, and then come to one of the pastors or Stephen Ministers for anointing.

MUSIC FOR MEDITATION

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Merideth Hite-Estevez, oboes; Zoe Lei, piano

arr. Sharp-Nelson/McDonald

Warm the Time of Winter

Lori True

When the wind of winter blows, bringing times of solitude,
Fill the silent, icy night; be our hearts' compassion.

Holy Light, warm our night; warm the time of winter.

Holy Light, warm our night; warm the time of winter.

When we shiver in despair, when the chill of death comes near,
Hold us, Spirit, calm out fear, while the evening deepens.

Holy Light, warm our night; warm the time of winter.

Holy Light, warm our night; warm the time of winter.

When in days of fallen snow, change confounds or love burns low,
From the ashes may there rise phoenix of our growing.

Holy Light, warm our night; warm the time of winter.

Holy Light, warm our night; warm the time of winter.

Nicole Joseph, soprano

CLOSING PRAYER

HYMN 467 – Give Us Light

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Stephen Ministers are available for personal, confidential prayer after the service. If you'd like some personal prayer and discussion, remain seated when the service ends. A Stephen Minister will come to you. If you or someone you know is in need of prayer please contact Nancy Lau at 248-835-6691.



Join us for coffee and fellowship in the Fireside Room after the Service of Comfort and Hope.

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Give Us Light Charles Vas, © 1990, GIA/Christian Conference of Asia.

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