

Longest Night of the Year:  
A Service of Remembrance



**December 20, 2009**

*The Spirit is breathing.*

*All those with eyes to see,  
women and men with ears for hearing  
detect a coming dawn;  
a reason to go on.*

*They seem small, these signs of dawn,  
perhaps ridiculous.*

*All those with eyes to see,  
Women and men with ears for hearing  
uncover in the night  
a certain gleam of light;  
they see the reason to go on.*

*Dom Helder Camera, It's Midnight, Lord*

**TONIGHT IS OUR "LONGEST NIGHT" SERVICE.**

Many of us struggle through the increasing physical darkness that leads to the winter solstice, our longest night. That physical darkness is sometimes reflected in the dark, lost feelings we have as we contemplate Christmas without loved ones, a holiday made uncertain by economic concerns, or the brokenness in our lives that separates us from others. Join us for this worship service of comfort, as we gather to acknowledge this darkness, to share our hurts with God, and to open our hearts to the light God has promised us in Jesus. Stephen Ministers, whose ministry is one of compassionate Christian presence, will participate in the service with the pastoral staff.

**PREACHING** today is the Reverend Melissa Anne Rogers.

**ASSISTING** are the Reverends Lawrence W. Farris and Jenny McDevitt.

**THE MUSIC DIRECTOR/PIANIST** is Carol Muehlig.

**THE HARPIST** is Deborah Gabrion.

**THE HANDBELL SOLOISTS** are Ann Flowers and Bonnie Palmquist.

**THE READERS** are Suzanne Fleming and Jeanette Kibler.

**THE GREETERS/USHERS** are Bill Wolters and Catherine Baker.

**COMMUNION SERVERS** are Bob Harris and Kathy Wirstrom.

Some of us walk into Advent tethered to our unresolved yesterdays, the pain still stabbing; the hurt still throbbing. It's not that we don't know better; it's just that we can't stand up anymore by ourselves. On the way to Bethlehem, will you give us a hand?

-- Ann Weems

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## THE GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE

*\* Please stand if you are able*

### GATHERING MUSIC

#### \*CALL TO WORSHIP

**Leader:** Tonight, we gather here in this place of refuge - the lost, the lonely, the uncertain. We gather with our common humanity in search of the uncommon grace of the Divine. Tonight, we gather in hope that our God the Creator has come in the creation of Jesus our Savior.

**People:** **The world is dark. Rejection still occurs, relationships fail, our hearts are heavy with grief. We hold the heartaches of humanity in our hands of tenderness.**

**Leader:** Tonight, we gather with neighbors and strangers, admitting that our brokenness shows. We come ready to empty our pockets of doubt and fill them with the hope others have embraced. We hope the One who has already come will come again to wipe all the tears from our eyes.

**People:** **In Jesus, we gather just as we are, for God has promised to meet us here. We come to pray and be prayed for. We come listening for a song we can sing. We come waiting for God's voice to break the darkness with a holy dawn.**

### OPENING PRAYER

## LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

*The candles will be lit by Jeff, Cyndy, and Sarah Colton.*

Leader: With our first candle, we remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their names, their faces, their voices, the memories that bind them to us in this season.

**All: May God's eternal love surround them.**

Leader: With our second candle, we remember that loss brings pain only God can redeem. Through our loss of relationships, loss of jobs, loss of health, and loss of hopes and dreams, our expectations and plans have been changed. We have come to an unwelcome place. We pause to gather up the pain of the past, offer it to God, and humbly ask to be at peace.

**All: Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into your future.**

Leader: With our third candle, we remember with gratitude those who reach out to those who experience the darkness of the world and the pain of loss. Family and friends and strangers who abide with the suffering, stay close to the ones who are angry, and listen to those who are depressed. We know God through them.

**All: Let us remember that dawn defeats darkness.**

Leader: With our fourth candle, we remember the flicker of our faith and the gift of hope which the incarnation offers to us. Here we remember that God who shares our life promises us a place and time where there will be no more suffering.

**All: It is our Savior Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, who bears the light and shows us the way, unveiling the truth of eternal life.**

\*HYMN 36 In the Bleak Midwinter

*Cranham*

## PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of all comfort, you have searched us and known us. In the increasing darkness all around, we hear the angels' songs of Advent for all people. Yet, they seem to bypass some of us. Some of us are stuck in the sorrow that life is not how we thought it would be. Some of us are in chronic distress. Some of us are perpetually unsettled. We thank you for your comfort and mercy, even when it is hard for us to receive fully. Where sadness lingers, where grief still claims us, let us receive in our hearts your assurance that you are with us. Let your truth dwell deeply within us, so that we would know that you are alongside us, helping to carry our burdens, and helping to let in the light of the Christ child.

## SILENT CONFESSION

### SUNG ASSURANCE Lord Hear Our Prayer

O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer:  
when I call an - swer me. O Lord, hear my prayer, O  
Lord, hear my prayer. Come and lis - ten to me. O

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It consists of three systems of music. Each system has a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The lyrics are printed below the vocal line. The first system ends with a double bar line. The second system ends with a double bar line. The third system ends with a double bar line and a fermata over the final note, with the words "Last time" written above the staff.

### \*PASSING THE PEACE

#### THE WORD PROCLAIMED IN SONG AND SCRIPTURE

HYMN Stay With Us, *verse 1*

*Ron Klusmeier*

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 73:1-5, 21-26 (O.T., pp. 534-35)

HYMN Stay With Us, *verse 2*

*Ron Klusmeier*

SCRIPTURE READING

Isaiah 58:6-12 (O.T., pp. 688-689)

HYMN Stay With Us, *verse 3*

*Ron Klusmeier*

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 2:8-20 (N.T., p. 58)

## MEDITATION

HYMN    **Be Still My Soul**

*words, Annemarie Kidder, from Psalm 46  
music Finlandia*

**Be still, my soul, and cease the reckless striving,  
give up the wish to conquer and to quell;  
leave to the Lord the guiding and providing,  
the claim to judge, the chances to prevail.  
Let go of battles of your own devising,  
and let the Lord appease your thought and will.**

**Be still, my soul, and face the haunting worries  
of changing times, of turbulence and strife;  
the roaring waters and the quaking mountains,  
the sense of being out of step with life.  
They are much smaller than you first had thought them  
and smaller still when seen against God's light.**

**Be still, my soul, you are the holy dwelling,  
the sanctuary of the living God,  
the house built on the rock of Christ's salvation,  
the new creation born of word and blood;  
you have been freed from life in isolation:  
you are a son and daughter of your God.**

**Be still, my soul, and cease the empty striving,  
the urge for triumph and the need for gain.  
Your fear of losing is but vain and idle,  
the urge to cling the source of needless pain.  
Be still, my soul, and learn to be abiding  
in patient trust that God will never fail.**

## RESPONDING TO THE WORD

### OFFERING

#### OFFERING MUSIC

*After the offering has been received, you are invited to come forward and light a candle to represent the losses and concerns that darken this season of holiness for you, whether it be a loss, a worry, a grief, or a period of pain and uncertainty.*

### THE SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION

#### INVITATION TO THE TABLE

#### PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

##### THE GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

**Leader:** The Lord be with you.

**People:** **And also with you.**

**Leader:** Lift up your hearts.

**People:** **We lift them to the Lord.**

**Leader:** Let us give thanks to the Lord.

**People:** **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

##### THE 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 debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

##### WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Breaking of the Bread, Pouring of the Cup

##### COMMUNION OF THE PEOPLE

*"All communion chalices contain only nonalcoholic grape juice. Gluten free wafers are on each tray, in the center cup.*

COMMUNION MEDITATION MUSIC

PRAYER FOLLOWING COMMUNION

**BEARING THE WORD INTO THE WORLD**

**\*HYMN 26 Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light** *Ermuntre Dich*

**\*LITANY OF SENDING First Coming** *Madeleine L'Engle*

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

**People: God came when the Heavens were unsteady  
and prisoners cried out for release.**

Leader: God did not wait for the perfect time.

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

Leader: God did not wait till hearts were pure.

**People: In joy God came to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.  
To a world like ours, of anguished shame, God came and  
God's Light would not go out.**

Leader: God came to a world which did not mesh;  
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.

**People: In the mystery of the Word made Flesh,  
the maker of the stars was born.**

Leader: We cannot wait till the world is sane to raise our songs  
with joyful voice, or to share our grief, to touch our pain,

**All: God came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!**

\*BENEDICTION

VOLUNTARY

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*Following the benediction, hot cider and Christmas cookies will be offered  
in the vestibule of Monteith Hall. Please stay and share fellowship with us.*

# *Announcements*

**THE SURVEY IS UP!** The Self Study Committee has completed and posted online the congregational survey for members and friends of the congregation to complete. An email with the link to the survey is included in the congregational email everyone should have received this week. The link will also be on the church website. Those members who receive First Press by regular mail will receive a printed copy of the survey shortly. The committee hopes as many folks as possible will take the 30 minutes needed to complete the survey between now and January 15. Your input is crucial! Thanks.

**CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP:** The Christmas Eve Family Service and Children's Pageant will be held at 3:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary. The Service of Lessons and Carols will be held at 5:00 and 7:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary. The Candlelight Communion Service will be held at 11:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary.

**CONSIDERATE PARKING CHOICES:** Christmas Eve is a time when many visitors come to First Pres for worship. We recommend coming to worship services early to ensure that parking and finding a seat is not a problem. Please leave as many parking spaces as possible open near the church for people with small children or those who might have difficulty walking. To make these spaces available, all who are able are asked to use one of the following alternative parking sites: **The Forest Street Structure** – a short block from the church, with free parking on Christmas Eve. **Washtenaw and Hill Streets** – parking is permitted on these streets for Christmas Eve. **Nearby fraternity and sorority houses:** **Chi Phi Fraternity**, next door at 1530 Washtenaw, **Kappa Alpha Theta Sorority**, next door at 1414 Washtenaw, **Delta Phi Epsilon Sorority**, next door to Chi Phi at 1550 Washtenaw, and **Sigma Delta Tau Sorority**, behind the church at 1405 Hill, will allow parking in their lots. Thanks to the house directors and officers of our neighboring fraternities and sororities for this annual gift to our church.

**CHRISTMAS EVE CHILDCARE:** We offer childcare **by reservation only** on Christmas Eve for the 3:00, 5:00 and 7:30 p.m. services. There is no childcare at the 11:00 p.m. service. If you would like to make a childcare reservation, please contact Deborah MacVey at 662-4466, ext. 15, or [dmacvey@firstpresbyterian.org](mailto:dmacvey@firstpresbyterian.org).

**THE CHILDREN'S PAGEANT DRESS REHEARSAL** will be **Tuesday, December 22**, at 3:45 p.m. in the Sanctuary.

**WE NEED CHRISTMAS EVE CHILDCARE VOLUNTEERS!** Grandparents, aunts and uncles, and entire families with teenage children have helped in the past. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Deborah MacVey at 662-4466, ext. 15, or [dmacvey@first-presbyterian.org](mailto:dmacvey@first-presbyterian.org).

**A CHRISTMAS EVE CHILDREN'S OFFERING** of underwear or socks will be accepted at the Christmas Pageant Family Service at 3:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve. The gifts should be simply wrapped in tissue paper. During the pageant, the children in the congregation are invited to bring their gifts to the manger. The underwear and socks are given to the House by the Side of the Road.

**THE RECIPIENT OF THIS YEAR'S CHRISTMAS EVE OFFERING** will be the Friends In Deed capital campaign for its new building on Ecorse Road in Ypsilanti. Friends In Deed is an interfaith volunteer organization that responds to the needs of Washtenaw County residents that other service agencies do not meet. It also provides services such as information, referrals, and screening, to congregations and agencies, as well as resources to people in need.

**YOU CAN NOW MAKE YOUR PLEDGE ONLINE!** To do so, visit the First Presbyterian Church website ([www.firstpresbyterian.org](http://www.firstpresbyterian.org)) and click on the "Growing Deeper and Wider" heading at the top right of the page. On the "Growing Deeper and Wider" page, look at the bulleted headings on the left side. Click on "Pledge Form 2010." Complete the online form and click "submit." It's that easy!

**AMERICAN EXPRESS IS ACCEPTED:** You can now pay your pledge using your American Express card. Questions? Contact John Sampsele, Finance Manager, at 662-4466, ext. 18.

**YOUTH NEWS:** All youth Sunday School students gather in Monteith Hall at 9:20 a.m. for Munch and Mingle. **MIDS** will return January 6. **High School Christmas Party** is Monday, December 21, from 5:00 to 7:30 p.m., at the King home, 3151 Honeysuckle Drive. Bring a wrapped DVD or CD in its original jewel box for the gift exchange, and a dessert to pass. RSVP to Cindy King at 995-1346. **Keystones** returns January 3. **The Norfolk Mission Trip**, June 19-27, closes December 31, or when it sells out. Cost is \$400, with \$210 fundraising.

**FOURTH SUNDAY POTLUCK IS GOING OUT!** Out to eat, that is. Instead of having the usual potluck for the month of December, we would like to invite everyone to go out to lunch on the 27th instead. For those interested, please meet in the Welcome Center following the 11:00 service to decide on a local restaurant.

**THE NEXT STEPHEN MINISTRY CONTINUING EDUCATION** offering will be held January 4. Lois Jelneck will discuss "Caring for the elderly who have to make difficult decisions." All sessions are Mondays, from 7:00 to 7:45 p.m. in the Youth Room. Refreshments will be served.

**THE ROTATING SHELTER, OUR NEW LOCAL MISSION:** In the last year, homelessness in Ann Arbor has increased by 30 percent. In response, the city has asked the Shelter Association of Washtenaw County to expand their Rotating Shelter program to help the overflow of homeless that cannot fit in the current shelter system in the Delonis Center.

From January 6 through 20, a set group of 25 homeless men, identified by the Shelter Association as good candidates for the program, will sleep on mats in our Social Hall. They will arrive at 8:00 p.m. each evening, after having dinner, showers, and a breathalyzer test at the Delonis Center, and leave at 7:00 a.m. the next morning for the St. Andrews Church breakfast program.

Our church will provide two to three volunteers per night for conversation with the men before bedtime and for safety (volunteers take turns staying awake so that everyone gets some sleep); transportation from the Delonis Center to First Pres; evening snacks, hot water, cocoa, coffee and transportation to St. Andrews in the morning. Please help by signing up to stay at church for one night during this time period, providing an evening snack one evening, or volunteering as an evening or morning driver. Questions? Contact Sue Chandler (suechandler@comcast.net, 996-2673), Jame Hayes (hayesdf@comcast.net, 827-0146), or Brian Williams (bwms@umich.edu, 669-0045), Rotating Shelter co-chairs, or the Reverends Matthew Nickel or Jenny McDevitt.

# *Calendar for December 21 - 26*

## **MONDAY:**

Body and Soul, 9:30 a.m., Curtis Room  
Advent Study, noon, Founders Room  
Rotating Shelter Steering Committee, 4:00 p.m., Vance Room  
KEYS Christmas Party, 5:00 p.m., King home, 3151 Honeysuckle Dr.

## **TUESDAY:**

Prayer Group, 7:30 a.m., Founders Room  
Advent Study, 7:45 a.m., Vance Room  
Advent Study, 10:00 a.m., Glacier Hills  
ESL, 1:00 p.m., Rooms 101, 102, 104, Youth Room  
Christmas Pageant Rehearsal, 3:45 p.m., Sanctuary, 400 Level  
Congregational Self-study Group, 7:00 p.m., French Room/Library

## **WEDNESDAY:**

PW Coordinating Meeting, 9:30 a.m., Vance Room  
Wednesday Night Meal, 3:00-7:15 p.m. (volunteers),  
5:30 (meal), Delonis Center  
Delonis Greeting Card Program, 5:00 p.m., Delonis Center  
Advent Study, 7:00 p.m., French Room/Library

## **THURSDAY - Christmas Eve:**

Christmas Pageant, 3:00 p.m., Sanctuary  
Lessons and Carols Worship Service, 5:00 and 7:30 p.m., Sanctuary  
Communion Candlelight Worship Service, 11:00 p.m., Sanctuary

## **FRIDAY - Christmas Day:**

Building Closed

## **SATURDAY:**

No Events Scheduled



*A Stephen Ministry  
Congregation*