

*FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH*



Blue Christmas Service
Sunday, December 10, 2023
3:00 P.M.

119 WEST COMMERCE STREET
BRIDGETON, NJ 08302
PHONE (856)455-0809 WWW.FPCBRIDGETON.ORG

ORDER OF WORSHIP

PRELUDE

WELCOME

Liturgist

GATHERING AROUND THE WORD

CALL TO WORSHIP

Liturgist

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. And also with you. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, on those who live in a land of shadow, deep shadow, a light has shone. The yoke that is weighing upon us, and the burden upon our shoulders, you have broken into pieces. O God, our redeemer, be near us and guide us through this season in our lives.

*HYMN

“Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus”

Booklet

CALL TO CONFESSION

Rev. Norlita Kaul

God of mercy, hear our prayer in the Advent Season, for ourselves, our families, and all in our world today, that live with painful thoughts and memories. **We ask for strength for today, courage and bright hope for tomorrow, and peace for the past.** We ask these in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who shares our daily life, our sorrow, our pain, our struggles, our despair. **We thank you for your promise and reminder that one day soon, joy will come again in the morning. Amen.**

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Rev. Norlita Kaul

God, you did not wait until the world was ready, for the nations to be at peace. God, you came when the heavens were unsteady and the prisoners cried out for release. God, you did not wait for the perfect time, you came when the need was deep and great. You dined with those

who doubted, who felt no need of you, and far away from you. Forgive us for our doubting, or feeling you are far away from us, for not feeling your presence in us and with us. God, please turn our water into wine, just as your Son did at Cana's wedding. God you came and your Light would not go out, in mystery, as your Word became flesh, as one with us. We cannot wait until this world is sane to raise our voices as sacrificial praise unto you, for you share our grief, you touch our pain, even now, especially now. Forgive us, renew us, free us, release us, and thank you for loving us. Amen.

(Silent Reflection)

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Rev. Norlita Kaul

Comfort my people, our Triune God says. To whom will you compare me, who is my equal? **Lift up your eyes on high and see O Mortal.** Who created these? **The One who brings out the heavenly host, numbers them, calls them and all by name, because this One is great in strength, mighty in power, that not one is missing.** Have you not known? Have you not heard? **The Lord is our everlasting God, our Creator of the earth, who does not faint nor grow weary.** His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faith, and strengthens the powerless. **This One will renew our strength, to mount up with wings like eagles, to run and not be weary, to walk, to not be faint, and always have hope. Glory and thanks be to you, Lord God!**

HYMN "Comfort, Comfort Now My People

Booklet

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

O come thou Dayspring, come and cheer, our spirits by thine advent here, disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death dark shadows put to flight. O come thou Wisdom, from on high, and order all things far and nigh. To us your path of knowledge show, and Holy spirit, cause us in your ways to go, as we now hear your Holy Word and draw comfort from it. Amen.

Readings From Scripture

Ecclesiastes 3: 1-11 The Message Translation

There's a Right Time for Everything

3 There's an opportune time to do things, a right time for everything on the earth:

A right time for birth and another for death,

A right time to plant and another to reap,

A right time to kill and another to heal,

A right time to destroy and another to construct,

A right time to cry and another to laugh,

A right time to lament and another to cheer,

A right time to make love and another to abstain,

A right time to embrace and another to part,

A right time to search and another to count your losses,

A right time to hold on and another to let go,

A right time to rip out and another to mend,

A right time to shut up and another to speak up,

A right time to love and another to hate,

A right time to wage war and another to make peace.

But in the end, does it really make a difference what anyone does? I've had a good look at what God has given us to do—busywork, mostly. True, God made everything beautiful in itself and in its time—but he's left us in the dark, so we can never know what God is up to, whether he's coming or going.

I've decided that there's nothing better to do than go ahead and have a good time and get the most we can out of life. That's it—eat, drink, and make the most of your job. It's God's gift.

The Psalm Antiphon (sung, see Booklet)

Booklet

Ps.13 How long, O Lord, will you ignore me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long will I have cares on my mind, grief in my heart all day? How long will the enemy have the upper hand? Deliver me, O God. **(Sing the**

Antiphon)

Look at me O Lord my God, answer me. Restore the luster to my eyes, lest the enemy shall say, "I have overcome them", my foes exult when I totter. Deliver me, O God. (Sing the antiphon) But I trust in Your faithfulness, my heart will exult in Your deliverance. I will sing to the Lord, who has been told to me. Deliver me, O God. **(Sing the antiphon)**

Psalm 121 The Message Translation

I look up to the mountains; does my strength come from mountains? No, my strength comes from GOD, who made heaven, and earth, and mountains. He won't let you stumble, your Guardian God won't fall asleep. Not on your life! Israel's Guardian will never doze or sleep. GOD's your Guardian, right at your side to protect you— Shielding you from sunstroke, sheltering you from moonstroke. GOD guards you from every evil, he guards your very life. He guards you when you leave and when you return, he guards you now, he guards you always.

Psalm 23 English Standard Version

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

***HYMN "Now the Heavens Start to Whisper" Booklet**

The Gospel Matt. 11:28-30

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you,

and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls, for My Yoke is easy, and my Burden is light.

The Word of God, for the People of God. Thanks be to God.

Hymn "In The Bleak Midwinter"

Booklet

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

The Prayers of the People-The Response-**And In Your Merciful Love, Answer.**

God of wisdom, we come to you today, tired, in turmoil, in pain. As the nights grow longer, the darkness grows too. It has wrapped itself around us, enveloped us, in ways we didn't expect, ask for, nor welcome. We ask your healing blessings upon all that we carry in and on our hearts, minds and spirits this day. It is a sorrow we fear, may never end, wounds and sighs, too deep for our words. Lord, hear our prayer. **And in Your Merciful Love, Answer.**

God of mercy and compassion, those among us this day, they are grieving for many reasons. Some weep for what might have been, others the death, the loss and/or terrible hurt of a beloved one or ones, a job, a goal, a cause, a dream. We find ourselves adrift and/or alone. We are weary from the journey; we find no room at the inn. We come seeking rest, shelter from the storm, our storm, and your peace. Lord, hear our prayer. **And in Your Merciful Love, Answer.**

God of grace, in the spirit of this Advent Season, grant us all that we need, to comfort us as we journey through these days of "holidays." We ask that you continue to shelter and sustain all of us gathered here and throughout the world, who wander, weep and are heavy laden. May we be lifted up in our courage and journey, on into your Peace O God, that our days of these "holidays," they become for us, "Holy Days," dedicated to you and your love, instead. Lord Hear our Prayer; **And in Your Merciful Love, Answer**

Gentle God of Love, help us reach out together for the light of our faith, the renewal and the new day that dawns for us. Grant that hope will come to rest in our hearts, and let it go forth within us into the future, with you as our partner, walking with us and in us, Lord Jesus our Emmanuel as we pray together.... Our Father..... Amen.

Hymn

“There’s A Star In The East”

Booklet

The Litany of Remembrance

First Candle- We light this candle to remember those whom we have loved and lost, to remember them clearly, their faces, their voices, their bodies, their love. We embrace and give thanks for the memories that bind us together yet still in this season of expectation, when all Creation waits for the Light. **We remember them with love. May God's eternal love surround them and us, always.**

Second Candle- We light this candle to remember the pain of loss, of relationships, of trust, of jobs, of health, of faith, the loss of joy. We acknowledge and embrace the pain of the past, loving God, and we offer it all to you, asking you into our wounded hearts and open our hands to You to place in them, the gifts of your love and shalom, your peace. **We remember that through You, all things are possible. Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into Your Love and future.**

The Third Candle- We light this candle to pause and reflect upon the past week, months, years, that have been heavy for us and upon us as burdens. We accept and lay before you, 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, the times we've spent blaming ourselves, others and you. We have all suffered. We accept and lay before you the time we have walked alone, in darkness and in the knowledge of our own finitude. **We remember that though we have journeyed far, and that**

