

**Holiday Blues Service
December 21, 2021**
Second Congregational Church in Wilton,
United Church of Christ

**Welcome to the worship of God at the
Second Congregational Church in Wilton,
United Church of Christ.**

We are glad you are here today!

***Bold print means congregational participation.
An asterisk (*) indicates to please stand, if you are able.***

GATHERING FOR THE WORD

WORDS OF WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Christmas can be a painful time for some. It may be the first Christmas without a loved family member who has recently died; it may be a time that has always been difficult. The constant refrains on radio and television, in shopping malls and churches, about the happiness of the season, about getting together with family and friends, reminds many people of what they have lost. The anguish of the death of a love one can make us feel alone in the midst of celebrating and joy. We need the space and time to acknowledge our sadness; we need to know that we are not alone. We need encouragement to live the days ahead of us.

There are times when life is good and beautiful, and celebration is appropriate. But there are also times of distress and loss. During those times we sing sad songs of lament, protest and complain about the chaos and harshness that life can sometimes be for us. We often feel afraid, angry, ashamed. Putting words to this season can often be difficult. But we do this together in our address to God.

MEDITATION

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who lived in a land of deep shadow a light has shone. For the yoke that was weighing upon them and the burden upon their shoulders, thou hast broken in pieces
O God.*

Isaiah 9:2, 4

PRELUDE

GREETING

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Jesus said, "Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." And so we invite each other to this time of peaceful worship. Tonight we come looking for the Christ child.

People: **We come, bringing our hurts, our worries and our fears.**

Leader: We come seeking relief from pain, anxiety, loneliness and despair. With the psalmist of the Scriptures we say,

People: "O Lord, you are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living, Give heed to my cry, for I am low."

All: **We come tonight to rest in God.**

*HYMN NO. 631

“There’s a Balm in Gilead”

OPENING PRAYER

(Unison)

God of Mercy, hear our prayer in this Advent Season for ourselves and our families who hold painful memories of loss, grief, separation or crippling stress. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow and peace for the past. We ask these things in the name of the Christ who shares our life in joy and sorrow, death and new birth, despair and promises. Amen.

LITANY OF REMEMBERING

Leader: We light our first candle.
A single light that the deepest darkness cannot conquer—
Small, insignificant—but a sign of hope.

People: Let it speak to us the tiny flame of hope buried within us -
The stubborn little light that refuses to be extinguished by
All that life has thrown at it.

[A moment of silence.]

Leader: We light our second candle.
A companion to the first—equally small, equally insignificant -
But witnessing to the hope that another light brings.

People: Let it speak to us of the lights of companionship—
Of our families and our friends—of strangers
And kindnesses found in unexpected places
That restored our hope in human nature.

[A moment of silence.]

Leader: We light our third candle recalling nights of watching and waiting—
Sleepless, anxious—when dawn seemed to ebb further from the horizon
And hope seemed forlorn.

People: Let it speak to us the sureness of morning—
Of the passing of darkness, of suffering
And the promise of an eternal sunrise
Dawning for those we have loved and lost and
Dawning to for us—
Though we may yet be in that darkest hour before the dawn.

[A moment of silence.]

Leader: We light our fourth candle—
Making the closing of the Advent season and
The immediacy of Christmas—
A time of peace and joy we may not ourselves feel able to welcome—
As our spirits dwell in dark and wintriness.

People: Let it speak to us of hope—
Of being together in this place of healing and wholeness—
Of our companionship this night at the turning of the year—
Of faith that we and those we have loved and lost
Are held eternally in the hand of the One who brought
Light into being and who knows each one of us by name.

[A moment of silence.]

SCRIPTURE READING

MEDITATION

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Leader: The God of strength moves within us;
People: **The God of courage hears our distress.**

Leader : The God of hope reveals wholeness to us;
People: **The God of healing touches us when we are broken.**

Leader : When the pain overwhelms us, when the burden is too heavy,
People: **We turn to our God, who is sustaining and redeeming.**

Leader : When there is loneliness, when there is isolation,
People: **We turn to our God, who is loving and present.**

Leader : For God created us, redeemed us and sustains us,
and we are not alone.

All: **Lead us in your ways, O God, and bring us your healing touch. Amen.**

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 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.

*HYMN NO. 429

“If you will trust in God to Guide You”

*BENEDICTION

*POSTLUDE

Announcements

If you need or want a visit by the pastor
please contact the church office 603-654-9045
or the pastor directly at 603-620-0235

On The Calendar

Christmas Eve Service, December 24th, 7:00 PM

PARTICIPATING IN TODAY'S SERVICE

Pastor Kerry Richardson (Interim Pastor)
Patricia Cauchon, Director of Music
All the Congregation, Ministers to the World

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