

A TIME OF REMEMBRANCE (*At this time, you may bring forward your butterfly of hope and remembrance and place in on the wreath.*)

PASTORAL PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

BENEDICTION

As we go our separate ways, may the power and the mystery go before you, showing the way. May the light of Christ shine above you and through you, illuminating the world around us. May the firm foundations of our faith stand beneath you and bear you up. May the presence of Christ walk with you in loving companionship. And may the Spirit of Christ flow within each of us and through us and among us, bringing us joy. Go in peace. Amen.

Please respect the quiet of this holy space and leave in silence.



While I am looking for something large, bright, and unmistakably holy, God slips something small, dark, and apparently negligible in my pocket. How many other treasures have I walked right by because they did not meet my standards?

—Barbara Brown Taylor

The United Church of Christ
(Congregational)

Blue Christmas

Service of Healing, Hope,
and Remembering



Sunday, December 19, 2021
7:00 p.m.



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
(Congregational)
13740 Pearl Road Strongsville, Ohio 44136
(440) 238-6697

Rev. Heidi Denman McDougall, *Pastor*
Thomas M. Foley, *Director of Music*
Mike Elkins, *Associate Director of Music*
Sharon Heinrich, *Supplemental Organist*



Sunday – December 19, 2021 – 7:00 P.M.

A Service of Healing, Hope & Remembering
(As we gather, please allow your mind to settle as you meditate
on these words of Hope.)

*I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in God's word I put my hope. –
Psalm 130:5*

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you and upon you all.

All: And also with you.

Leader: When darkness tries to eclipse the light, we wait upon the Lord.

People: When the world seems drenched in darkness, God comes to live and dwell among us, shining a light in the world that cannot be extinguished.

Through God's Spirit, the light still shines in our hearts today.

Leader: Jesus showed us, through his example, what it means to walk in the Way.

People: Through Christ, we are made one with God. Through faith, light overcomes darkness. Through trust, we are made whole once more.

Leader: Tonight, we re-commit our lives to living in love, waiting in hope, and walking in peace.

People: We choose to turn away from our old way of being, and allow our pain to be transformed by God's love, giving us a new life of freedom and a peace that passes all understanding.

All: Thanks be to God.

WORDS OF PROMISE AND PROPHECY:

Isaiah 6: 1-3, *NSRV*

[silent meditation]

GOSPEL WORDS OF HOPE:

Matthew 11:28-30, *The Message*

[silent meditation]

PRAYER:

Most merciful God, especially during this Advent season of waiting, hear our prayers: for ourselves and those we love as we seek understanding; struggling with feelings of desperation or separation from you; trying to understand the mysteries of ordinary life. Lord, help us find grace to make peace with the past; strength to get through today; and courage to face tomorrow. We ask these things in the name of the Christ, who walks and waits faithfully with us through every season of our lives. Amen.

REFLECTION:

"Oh, so very long. . . ."

Psalm 103, *New Revised Standard Version*

LITANY OF REMEMBERING/ LIGHTING OF CANDLES

Leader: As we wrap ourselves in God's loving embrace, we light this first Candle of Hope. We pause to reflect on beautiful moments of light in the darkness, laughter amidst the tears, and love found in unexpected places. We give thanks to God for the many angels in our midst.

People: Help us remember that the dawn *always* banishes the darkness.
[silence]

Leader: As we light this second candle, the Candle of **Love**, we remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause and remember their names, their faces, their voices, the memories that bind our hearts to theirs, and give thanks for their presence in our lives.

People: May the eternal love of the Almighty surround them and comfort us.
[silence]

Leader: We light the third candle, the Candle of **Promise**, to redeem the pain of broken promises: relationships that failed, health that diminishes, fears for an uncertain future. We pause to gather up the pain of the past and offer it to God. We rest in **the faithfulness of God's promises.**

People: Renew us, O Lord. Restore us, refresh us and lead us forward into your future.
[silence]

Leader: The fourth candle, the Candle of **Peace**, we light as a reminder of the faithfulness of the Holy One, who came as an ordinary child, born in the usual way, raised in a loving home. We remember that God-in-flesh experienced pain, knew deep suffering and loss; yet he promises us a peace that will pass all understanding.

People: Today, we pray for that peace to fill our hearts.
[silence]

[Continued]