



INTERACTIVE ORDER FOR LIVE STREAM WORSHIP

Sunday, December 6, 2020 ~ Longest Night Service

7:00 p.m. Worship (Sanctuary)

Gathering Thoughts

The holiday season is often seen as a time of celebration and joy. For many people, it can be a particularly depressing time of year. Not just with the challenges of COVID – the isolation and loneliness, not being able to hug our friends and family – but also because the holidays can bring back memories of those we have lost. We think of people we wish could be here celebrating with us. Grief can feel intense this time of year. Allow yourself not to hide or suppress those feelings but embrace them, realizing that they bring you much closer to the real Christmas story found in the person of Jesus.

This evening we remember the true story: A helpless Babe born into a world that was struggling, a world that was questioning where God was. A helpless Babe born into a family that was poor, tired, and frightened. A helpless Babe Who would change all this for the world.

Welcome and Work of God's People

Rev. Stuart Spencer

Music in Preparation for Worship

Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

Joel Krott, Organ
Gwen Wilkie, Alto

Lighting of the Christ Candle

Rev. Spencer

Call to Worship

Rev. Spencer

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

On those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned.

For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given; and the government will be on His shoulders.

And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the greatness of His government and peace, there will be no end.” Come, let us worship God!

Lighting of the First Candle

Kelly LePenske

We light the first Advent candle and remember those persons who have been loved and lost. We pause to remember their names, their faces, their voices. We give thanks for the memory that binds them to us in this season. [Silence] Let us pray:

Lord, surround us all with your eternal love.

Hymn

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (v. 1)

Words of Comfort: [Psalm 103:13-17](#)

Kelly LePenske

Lighting of the Second Candle

Rev. Spencer

We light a second candle, mindful of the many sources of loss and grief: the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, or the loss of health. As we gather up all our pain, we offer it to you, O God, asking that into our open hands, You will place the gift of peace. [Silence] Let us pray:

Hold us; help us; heal us, O God.

Hymn

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (v. 2)

Words of Comfort: [Psalm 139:11-12](#)

Rev. Spencer

Lighting of the Third Candle

Kelly LePenske

We light a third candle to acknowledge the pain of our loss in this Christmas season. We pause to remember the past weeks, months and, for some of us, years of difficult times. In the poignancy of memories, we feel all the grief, the sadness, the hurts, and the fears, and we entrust them to Christ, the suffering servant Who is victorious over death itself. [Silence] Let us pray:

We remember that the dawn overcomes the darkness.

Hymn

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (v. 3)

Words of Comfort: [Psalm 34:19](#)

Kelly LePenske

Lighting of the Fourth Candle

Rev. Spencer

We light a fourth candle to remember all who have shared in our sorrow. We thank you, Lord, for their compassion, for their presence with us in times when our hurt went deeper than words could express. We remember that you, Lord, sent Your Holy Spirit to sympathize with our weakness and to carry our sorrows. [Silence] Let us pray:

Lord, we thank You for Your steadfast love that endures forever.

Hymn

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (v. 4)

Words of Comfort: [Matthew 5:4, 7](#)

Rev. Spencer

[Christmas in the Darkness and Storm](#)

Sermon Series: Be Not Afraid

The Lord's Supper

Rev. Spencer

Prayer of Hope

God of compassion, we come again to You as Christmas nears. We grieve over what might have been. A death, loss, or struggle tarnishes our experience of this season. We feel cut off from joy, lost from what we once felt, wondering if the light will indeed come. We find ourselves adrift, alone, lost. Lord, help us find our way.

Loving God, hear our prayer,
and in Your merciful love, answer.

The Advent season reminds us of what used to be but is no more. Memories of what was and fears of what may be keep us from the joy of today. All around are the sounds of celebration, but joy eludes us. Be near us this night.

Loving God, hear our prayer,
and in Your merciful love, answer.

In this season of Advent waiting, we bring You those sorrows and longings too deep for words. Hear the groans of our hearts, and tend us with Your comfort and grace.

Loving God, hear our prayer,
and in Your merciful love, answer.

In the silence, we bring You our own words of need, our own words of hope.

[Silence]

In this dark night, let our fears of the darkness of the world and of our own lives rest in You. In the quietness of this night, may Your peace enfold us, those dear to us, and all who have no peace. Keep us in the truth that the night is nearly over; the day is almost here. We look expectantly to a new day, to new joys.

Loving God, hear our prayer,
and in Your merciful love, answer. Amen.

All these things we ask in Jesus' name, Who has taught to pray: **The Lord's Prayer** (*debts*).

Words of Hope

May Your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in You.

Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;

they will run and not grow weary;

they will walk and not be faint.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

—Psalm 33:22; Isaiah 40:31; Romans 15:13

Lighting of Candles and Song of Peace

Silent Night, Holy Night

As the hymn is sung, you're encouraged to prayerfully light a candle at home in memory, in honor, in gratitude, in hope, or in love, inviting the love of Christ to dispel our darkness.

Benediction (presented by video)

Beth Douglass

[1 Peter 5:10-11](#)

Greeting

The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

And also with you.

Pastoral Staff: Rev. Stuart Spencer, Kelly LePenske, Beth Douglass

Musicians: Joel Krott, Gwen Wilkie

Sound Technician: Harris Ransom

- **The (Un)simple Truth – Monday, Dec. 7, 7:00 p.m.:** This month's topic: *Becoming Peacemakers*. Our speaker is Amanda Mootz, manager of grassroots organizing for World Vision. She developed and manages a program for faith-rooted advocacy to federal lawmakers on issues related to global poverty. Please [join us via Zoom](#) to participate in these informative discussions.

The
(Un)simple
Truth

Spiritual Formation Online!

- **At Home for the Holidays – Sunday, Dec. 13, 7:30 p.m.:** FREE live stream Concert of the West Jersey Chamber Music Society's Chorale from the comfort of your home. Host Ivan Woods guides audiences through the festive evening. Register online at <https://wjcms.org/holiday/> in advance to receive a reminder and a PDF program at concert time. This program will be broadcast online at www.wjcms.org and www.fpcmoorestown.org.

Joel Krott, Music Director



AT HOME
FOR THE
HOLIDAYS

