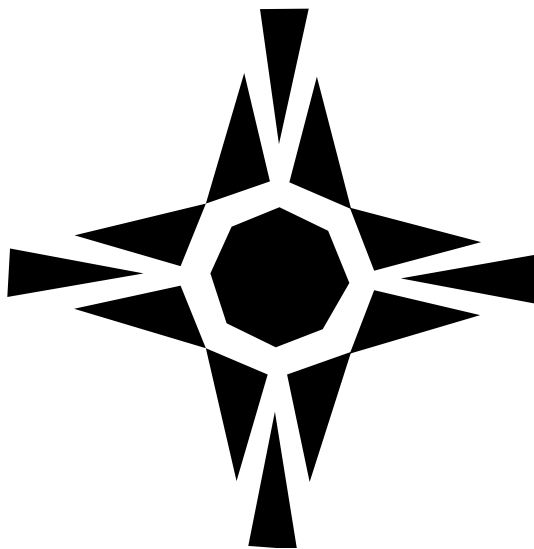


Gregory Memorial Presbyterian Church



A Service of Hope on the
Darkest Night

December 21, 2018, 7:00 p.m.

Gathering

One: Tonight, we gather here in this place of refuge,

All: For we are lost, we are lonely, we are afraid.

One: Tonight, we gather daring to wonder if God has indeed come in Jesus,

All: Discerning the rejection we have known, intimate with our failed relationships, holding our heartaches in hands of tenderness.

One: Tonight, we gather just as we are,

All: For God has promised to meet us here and welcome us for who we are.

One: This first candle we light to remember those whom we love and have lost. We pause to remember their names, their faces, their voices, the memory that binds them to us in this season.

All: May God's eternal love surround them. (pause)

One: This second candle we light to redeem the pain of loss; the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health. We pause to gather up the pain of the past and offer it to God, asking that from God's hands we receive the gift of peace.

All: Refresh, restore, renew us O God, and lead us into your future. (pause)

One: This third candle we light to remember ourselves in this Advent and Christmas season. We pause and remember these past weeks and months; the disbelief, the anger, the downtimes, the poignancy of remembering, the warmth of family and friends, all who have stood with us. We give thanks for the support we have known.

All: Let us remember that dawn defeats darkness. (pause)

One: This fourth candle is lit to remember our faith and the gift of hope which the Christmas story offers us. We remember that God, who shares our life, promises for us a time and place of no more pain or suffering.

All: Let us remember the One who shows us the way, who brings the truth, and who bears the life. (pause)

First Reading Psalm 22:1-5, 14-15, 22-24 p434-5

Second Reading John 1:1-5 p862

Meditation Rev. Jason Cashing

Remembering Our Loved Ones

At this time, any who wish to do so may come forward and light a candle in the memory of a loved one or lost relationship.

Prayer of Remembrance & Hope

Closing Response

One: In the spirit of those we have remembered today

All: We carry the light out into the world.

One: In the confidence of faith in our Creator

All: We carry the light out into the world.

One: In remembering God's promises kept in baby Jesus

All: We carry the light out into the world.

One: In the strength of a Christ who robbed death of its power

All: We carry the light out into the world.

One: In the presence of the life-giving Spirit

All: We carry the light out into the world.

One: Sharing faith that the darkness will end

All: We carry the light out into the world.

Blessing & Dismissal

The Winter Solstice is the one night each year of the longest darkness, the least daylight. It represents to us the darkness which still dwells in our world, in our lives, and in our hearts, as well as the pain of loss and the brokenness of relationships.

Yet into this darkness, even at its most prevalent, there is still Light which shines, illuminating our way and warming our hearts.

As we gather on this night, we gather seeking the Light
—
for ourselves, and for our world.

We pray that you know peace in the presence of God this night, and in the days to come as well. If you would like to talk further, pastor Jason Cashing will be happy to meet with you.

You are warmly invited to attend our Christmas Eve services, on Monday, December 24. A family service will be offered at 6:30 p.m., and a Lessons & Carols service with communion will be offered at 11:00 p.m.

*We will faithfully gather with family and friends, and the story of the nativity joyously proclaimed.
You are welcome, indeed!*