

A dark blue background featuring a silhouette of a nativity scene. In the foreground, there are silhouettes of three camels, a man on a donkey, a cow, and a manger with baby Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Two angels are shown flying above the manger. In the background, there are silhouettes of pyramids and a large, bright star in the sky. The text is overlaid on this scene.

CHESTER UNITED METHODIST

CHRISTMAS EVE
WORSHIP

3:00 PM - Family Friendly Worship

7:00 & 10:00 PM - Candlelight Communion

12132 Percival Street, Chester, VA 23831 - 804/748-6006

www.chesterumc.org

WORSHIP LEADERSHIP

Chad Beck, *Associate Pastor*

Joshua Wortham, *Minister of Music*

Tabitha Strickler, *Liturgist*



Blue Christmas Worship Service

December 19, 2021

3:00 PM

4th Sunday of Advent

Prelude
Welcome

Of the Father's Love Begotten

Pianist

* Call to Worship

Leader: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by God, and without God nothing came to be. What came to be through God was life, and the life was the light of the world.

People: **The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.**

* Hymn No. 230

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Psalm 22

Leader: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, so far from the words of my groaning?

People: **O my God, I cry by day but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.**

Leader: In you, our ancestors trusted. They trusted and you delivered them.

People: **It was you who brought me from the womb, you who kept me safe on my mother's breast. Since my mother bore me, you have been my God.**

Leader: Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

People: **God does not despise the affliction of the afflicted. God does not hide from me. When I cry to God, God hears me. Thanks be to God.**

Scripture

John 20:24-29

Sermon

Rev. Chad Beck

Litany of Remembrance

Leader: We light this first candle to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember clearly, their faces, their voices, their bodies. We embrace and give thanks for the memories that bind them to us in this season of expectation, when all Creation waits for the Light.

People: We remember them with love. May God's eternal love surround them.

Sing: *O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here, until the son of God appear. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

Silent reflection.

Leader: We light this second candle to remember the pain of loss: loss of relationships, loss of trust, loss of jobs, loss of health, loss of faith, the loss of joy. We acknowledge and embrace the pain of the past, O God, and we offer it to You, asking that into our wounded hearts and open hands You will place the gift of peace, shalom.

People: We remember that through You all things are possible. Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into Your future.

Sing: *O come, thou Wisdom from on high, and order all things far and nigh; to us the path of knowledge show and cause us in her ways to go. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

Silent reflection.

Leader: We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and for some of us years, that have been heavy with our burdens. We accept and lay before you, God, 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, and the times we have spent blaming ourselves, and you, for all that we have suffered. We accept and lay before you the time we have walked alone, in darkness; and in knowledge of our own mortality.

People: We remember that though we have journeyed far, and that, while lost, we may have turned away from the light, the light itself has not failed. We remember that though winter be upon us and though the night be dark, with the turning of the Wheel the dawn will come, and dawn defeats the darkness.

Sing: O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thy advent here; disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.
Silent reflection.

Leader: We light this fourth candle to remember faith, the gift of light and hope that God offers to us in the stories of Hanukkah and of Christmas, which both also began in abandonment, insecurity, and humbleness, in a time of war and in a poor stable. We remember that the loving God who kept the light shining in the temple and who came to share this life with us promises us comfort and peace.

People: We remember the One who shares our burdens, who shows us the way to the Light, and who journeys with us into all our tomorrows.

Sing: O come, Desire of nations bind all peoples in one heart and mind. From dust thou brought us forth to life; deliver us from earthly strife. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.
Silent reflection.

Candle Lighting

As you feel led, come to the table and take a tea light from the basket. Light it by tilting it toward one of the blue candles. Place it on the table as a sign of the Light dispelling the darkness you carry this season. You may pause to pray at the Altar. Stephen Ministers are available to pray with you at the kneeling rails to the left and right of the Altar.

Prayer

Almighty God, we thank you for your constant love and for the blessings of this day. We know that even when we cannot see or feel you, still you are there. Help us to remember you and to listen for your voice in the words of family, friends, and strangers. Kindle our hearts and awaken hope, that we may know you as you reveal yourself in the world and in our lives. Let the light of your Holy Spirit shine like these candles in the darkness, lighting the way for all who feel despairing, lost, or forgotten. Grant that the light may come to dwell so deeply in our hearts that when we leave this place it may shine on, for us and for those we meet along the way. Amen.

* Hymn No. 217

Away in a Manger

* Benediction

* *Please stand as you are able. Bold print indicates a response in unison.*

Liturgies from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/blue-christmas-a-service-of-reflection-for-the-longest-night>