

# WINTER GRACE

A SERVICE OF  
COMFORT AND HOPE



**First Presbyterian Church**  
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**WINTER GRACE**  
*A Service of Comfort and Hope*  
**December 27, 2020 ■ 6:00 P.M.**

But as for me, I will look to the Lord;  
I will wait for the God of my salvation;  
my God will hear me.  
Rejoice not over me, O my enemy;  
when I fall, I shall rise;  
when I sit in darkness,  
the Lord will be a light to me.  
~ Micah 7:7-8

**Prelude**

**The Gathering**

**Opening Meditation –**

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

Romans 8:26

**\* Call to Worship – Psalm 13**

*Minister:* How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?  
How long will you hide your face from me?  
How long must I take counsel in my soul  
and have sorrow in my heart all the day?  
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

*All:* **Consider and answer me, O Lord my God;  
light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,  
lest my enemy say, “I have prevailed over him,”  
lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.**

*Minister:* But I have trusted in your steadfast love;  
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

*All:* **I will sing to the Lord,  
because he has dealt bountifully with me.**

*Minister:* Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father  
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

**People: And also with you.**

**Invitation—“O Come, All You Unfaithful”**.....Lisa Clow and Bob Kauflin  
Hillary Watkins, Rene Young

O come all you unfaithful  
Come weak and unstable  
Come know you are not alone  
O come barren and waiting ones  
Weary of praying, come  
See what your God has done  
Christ is born, Christ is born  
Christ is born for you  
O come bitter and broken  
Come with fears unspoken  
Come taste of His perfect love  
O come guilty and hiding ones  
There is no need to run  
See what your God has done  
He's the Lamb who was given  
Slain for our pardon  
His promise is peace  
For those who believe  
So come, though you have nothing  
Come He is the offering  
Come see what your God has done

**Invocation**

God of mercy, hear our prayer in this difficult season for ourselves, and for our families and friends who live with the struggles of illness and the pain of loss. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow, and peace for the past. We ask these things in the name of Jesus, who shares our life in joy and sorrow, death and new birth, despair and promise. Amen.

**Hymn**                      “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”

*stanzas 1, 4–5*

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.

O come, thou Dayspring from on high  
And cheer us by thy drawing nigh;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

O come, thou Key of David, come  
And open wide our heav'nly home;  
Make safe the way that leads on high,  
And close the path to misery.

## Prayers of Confession and Assurance of Pardon

### Call to Confession [minister only]

Our Heavenly Father, we come to You this day to confess our weaknesses regarding our relationship with You; places where our faith is under sharp attack: You know that we come to You with heavy hearts that we find hard to unburden. It is particularly in this time of year when the darkness of long nights collides with the brilliance of Christmas lights, that we find it hard to express our losses, our fears, our doubts and our struggles. We may be confused, sad, lonely, and feeling our losses without remembering that You are always there to support us. Father, forgive any bitterness or blame-shifting. Sometimes we feel cut off from You because we allow our many hurts to engulf us. We lack trust in You. Open us to the understanding that You are the source of all love, and we need not feel so alone in our grief. Grant us wisdom to know that You—most of all—can be trusted, and that You are with us, especially when we are at our absolute worst.

### Corporate Prayer of Confession

**All:** My soul also is greatly troubled.  
I am weary with my moaning;  
every night I flood my bed with tears;  
I drench my couch with my weeping.  
My eye wastes away because of my grief;  
it grows weak because of all my foes.  
Depart from me, all you workers of evil,  
for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping.  
The Lord has heard my plea; the Lord accepts my prayer.  
Psalm 6:6–9

Minister: Lord Jesus, You heal the sick; have mercy.

**People: Lord, have mercy.**

Minister: Lord Jesus, You forgave sinners; have mercy.

**People: Lord, have mercy.**

Minister: Lord Jesus, You give Yourself to heal us, rescue us and bring us strength; have mercy.

**People: Lord, have mercy.**

### Assurance of Pardon – Isaiah 53:3-5

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and by his wounds we are healed.

Come, thou long-expected Jesus,  
Born to set thy people free;  
From our fears and sins release us;  
Let us find our rest in thee.  
Israel’s strength and consolation,  
Hope of all the earth thou art;  
dear Desire of ev’ry nation,  
Joy of every longing heart.

Come to earth to taste our sadness,  
he whose glories knew no end;  
by his life he brings us gladness,  
our Redeemer, Shepherd, Friend,  
Leaving riches without number,  
born within a cattle stall;  
this the everlasting wonder,  
Christ was born the Lord of all.

A Story of Rescue.....Dr. Sarah Joiner

Affirmation of Our Faith – The Heidelberg Catechism, question 1:

- Minister:

What is your only comfort in life and death?
- People:

That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ, who with His precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me, that without the will of my Heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; even more, all things must be subservient to my salvation. And, therefore, by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto Him.
- Minister:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35–39)

# The Ministry of the Word

## Scripture Reading – *Isaiah 30:18–21*

Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you,  
and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you.  
For the LORD is a God of Justice;  
blessed are all those who wait for him.

For a people shall dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem; you shall weep no more.  
He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he  
hears it, he answers you. And though the Lord give you the bread of  
adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide  
himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. And your ears  
shall hear a word behind you, saying, “This is the way, walk in it,” when  
you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.

**Meditation**

“Grieving, Waiting and Longing”

Edward Hartman

## The Prayers of Supplication and Intercession

### Corporate Prayer for Healing [in unison]

Father, mend us and make us better than we could ever be without You. Take  
those things that are broken in our lives and visit us with Your healing. And  
help us to use the strength we receive in Your service, to Your glory!

### Litany of Healing

**Minister:** God the Father, Your will for Your people is life and salvation;

**Response:** **We praise You and thank You, O Lord.**

**Minister:** God the Son, You came that we might have life, and might have  
it more abundantly;

**Response:** **We praise You and thank You, O Lord.**

**Minister:** God the Holy Spirit, You make our bodies the temple of Your  
presence;

**Response:** **We praise You and thank You, O Lord.**

**Minister:** Holy Trinity, one God, in You we live and move and have our  
being;

**Response:** **We praise You and thank You, O Lord.**

**Minister:** Lord, grant Your healing grace to all who are sick, injured, or  
disabled, that they may be made whole;

**Response:** **Hear us, O Lord of life.**

**Minister:** Grant to all who seek Your guidance, and to all who are lonely,  
anxious, or despondent, knowledge of Your will and an  
awareness of Your presence;

**Response:** **Hear us, O Lord of life.**

**Minister:** Mend broken relationships, and restore those in emotional  
distress to soundness of mind and serenity of spirit;

**Response:** **Hear us, O Lord of life.**

Minister: Bless physicians, nurses, and all others who minister to the suffering, grant them wisdom and skill, sympathy and patience;

**Response: Hear us, O Lord of life.**

Minister: Grant to the dying peace and a holy death, and uphold by the grace and consolation of Your Holy Spirit those who are bereaved;

**Response: Hear us, O Lord of life.**

Minister: Restore to wholeness whatever is broken by human sin-- in our lives, in our relationships, in our nation, and in the world;

**Response: Hear us, O Lord of life.**

Minister: You are the Lord who does wonders; with You all things are possible:

**Response: You have declared Your power among the peoples.**

Minister: With You, O Lord, is the well of life:

**Response: And in Your light we see light.**

Minister: Hear us, O Lord of life:

**Response: Heal us, and make us whole.**

## Silent Prayer for Healing

### A Liturgy for Embracing both Joy and Sorrow

Do not be distant, O Lord, lest I find this burden of loss too heavy, and shrink from the necessary experience of my grief.

Do not be distant, O Lord, lest I become so mired in yesterday's hurts, that I miss entirely the living gifts this day might hold.

Let me neither ignore my pain, pretending all is okay when it isn't, nor coddle and magnify my pain, so that I dull my capacity to experience all that remains good in this life.

For joy that denies sorrow is neither hard-won, nor true, nor eternal. It is not real joy at all. And sorrow that refuses to make space for the return of joy and hope, in the end becomes nothing more than a temple for the worship of my own woundedness.

So give me strength, O God, to feel this grief deeply, never to hide my heart from it. And give me also hope enough to remain open to surprising encounters with joy, as one on a woodland path might stumble suddenly into dapplings of golden light.

Amidst the pain that lades these days, give me courage, O Lord; courage to live them fully, to love and to allow myself to be loved, to remember, grieve, and honor what was, to live with thanksgiving in what is, and to invest in the hope of what will be.



Be at work gilding these long heartbreaks with the advent of new joys, good friendships, true fellowships, unexpected delights. Remind me again and again of your goodness, your presence, your promises.

For this is who we are: a people of The Promise—a people shaped in the image of the God whose very being generates all joy in the universe, yet who also weeps and grieves its brokenness.

So we, your children, are also at liberty to lament our losses, even as we simultaneously rejoice in the hope of their coming restoration.

Let me learn now, O Lord, to do this as naturally as the inhale and exhale of a single breath:

To breathe out sorrow, to breathe in joy.

To breathe out lament, to breathe in hope.

To breathe out pain, to breathe in comfort.

To breathe out sorrow, to breathe in joy.

In one hand I grasp the burden of my grief, while with the other I reach for the hope of grief's redemption.

And here, between the tension of the two, between what was and what will be, in the very *is* of now, let my heart be surprised by, shaped by, warmed by, remade by, the same joy that forever wells within and radiates from your heart, O God.

Amen.

*From EVERY MOMENT HOLY, VOL 2: DEATH, GRIEF, & HOPE  
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### **Declaration of Future Hope**

Minister: Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. *He will wipe every tear from their eyes.* There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." Revelation 21:1–5

**People:** Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and

momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

**Closing Prayer**

Lord, we pray for all who have been in attendance this night, that they all may have the inward anointing of the Holy Spirit. And for all those who have prayed—those who seek your mercy—those who have lifted their hearts to you in thanksgiving and in longing—for all present here, Father, we give thanks and ask that you continue with them day by day. Indeed, O Lord, keep us all from all evil, preserve us in all goodness. Bless us so that we may bless others in your most Holy Name—we ask it in the name of Christ Jesus—who taught us to pray together as one family, saying...

**The Lord’s Prayer (*in unison*)**

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

**The Blessing of Peace—“Shalom”** .....Dan Forrest  
Hillary Watkins, Rene Young

**\* Benediction – 1 Peter 5:10–11**

Minister: And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever.

**People: Amen.**

**Postlude**

“And when these things begin to come to pass,  
then look up, and lift up your heads;  
for your redemption is drawing near.”  
Luke 21:28

## **The Blessing of Prayer Immediately Following the Worship Service**

### **An Invitation**

It would be the distinct honor and privilege of our ministers and session to pray with you individually in a more private venue. If you so desire, you may come to one of the rooms listed below, and you will be greeted by one of our ministers and elders. Special prayer and intercession will be made on your behalf.

### **James 5:13–16**

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

### **Locations**

(1) The Session Room; (2) The Parlor; (3) The Hutton Chapel. Any of these rooms may be easily accessed as you exit the sanctuary through the doors leading to the greeting courtyard. Our staff will also be available to direct you.

### **Mary's Song**

Blue homespun and the bend of my breast  
keep warm this small hot naked star  
fallen to my arms. (Rest ...  
you who have had so far  
to come.) Now nearness satisfies  
the body of God sweetly. Quiet he lies  
whose vigor hurled  
a universe. He sleeps  
whose eyelids have not closed before.  
His breath (so slight it seems  
no breath at all) once ruffled the dark deeps  
to sprout a world.  
Charmed by doves' voices, the whisper of straw,  
he dreams,  
hearing no music from his other spheres.  
Breath, mouth, ears, eyes  
he is curtailed  
who overflowed all skies,  
all years.  
Older than eternity, now he  
is new. Now native to earth as I am, nailed  
to my poor planet, caught that I might be free,  
blind in my womb to know my darkness ended,  
brought to this birth  
for me to be new-born,  
and for him to see me mended  
I must see him torn.

*Luci Shaw,  
Accompanied by Angels: Poems of the Incarnation*

## **Advent Prayer of Lament**

Lord, we look with hope for the day  
when there is no more grief,  
no more sorrow,  
no more sin,  
no more death.  
When you return, there will be no sickness,  
no more weakness,  
no more anxiety,  
no more failing strength,  
but we will be made complete.  
We will see you,  
and our souls will overflow with joy, worship, and blessings.

Here, we see things darkly,  
our hopes are obscured by the suffering that surrounds us  
and by the sinful longings of our own hearts.  
We prefer comfort to holiness  
and our hopes are set on temporary material things,  
rather than eternal promises.

Give us a hunger for heaven  
by opening our eyes to how far we are from home.  
Show us how unsatisfying this world is,  
so we can find satisfaction in the Gospel  
and cling to Christ alone. Amen.

~ Mike Cospers