

Come Join Us

9:15 a.m.

Christian Education

(ages 3-Adult)

10:30 a.m.

Worship

11:30 a.m.

Fellowship

This service is titled, "The Longest Night," because so often the glow of Christmas lights, holiday cheer, and Advent candles can feel unreachable to those surrounded by loss or grief. The longest night of the year, or the winter solstice, takes place on December 21st.

Our hope is that this worship service will create a safe and sacred space for those who are struggling to feel the joy and light of this holiday season due to loss of any kind. We hope this service will acknowledge the hole that grief leaves in one's heart while simultaneously remembering that we worship a God who is with us, even in the darkest of times.



Service of the Longest Night
First Presbyterian Church Red Wing

503 West Sixth Street - Red Wing, MN
Wednesday, December 19th 2018

PRELUDE

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Creator God, hover over this space—

Many: For Grief is like an ocean, pulling us back in, and we need you in the midst of the waves.

One: Creator God, hold us in your arms—

Many: For our hands are already full, carrying memories and heartache, and we need you to carry us.

One: Creator God, in times of joy and in times of sorrow, we turn to you.

Many: Thank you for staying through the longest nights. We worship you. Let it be so.

*HYMN

Hymn #88 "O Come, O Come Emmanuel"

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

One: This first candle we light to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their name, their face, their voice, the memory that binds them to us in this season. (Pause).

Many: May God's eternal love surround them.

One: This second candle we light is to redeem the pain of loss; the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health. (Pause) 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.

Many: Refresh, restore, renew us O God, and lead us into your future.

One: This third candle we light is to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember these past weeks and months; the disbelief, the anger, the down times, the poignancy of reminiscing, the hugs and handshakes of family and friends, all those who stood with us. (Pause) We give thanks for the support we have known.

Many: Let us remember that dawn defeats darkness.

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

Many: Let us remember the one who shows the way, who brings the truth and who bears the light.

POEM

"Let There Be You" by Sarah Are

RESPOND

Naming Our Grief

As a way to acknowledge our grief, you are invited to take the stone you received at the beginning of the service and write a reminder of your grief on it. Using a permanent marker provided, you may write the name or initials of a loved one, or you may name a loss or circumstance that causes you to grieve.

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 69: 3, 13-18

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

One: God of connection and love, I confess—

Many: there are people singing tonight, but my heart is too heavy for singing.

One: God of my heart and my mind, I confess—

Many: I know that I need you, but it's hard to let you in. Grief builds walls where love had once been.

One: God of the here and now, I confess—

Many: There is guilt that I carry, and memories to bury, but forgiving myself seems unnecessary.

One: God of my prayers and my dreams, I confess—

Many: This path of grief is miserably hard, bringing out the worst in me. Forgive me when I get it wrong. Love me back to grace and peace. Amen.

RELEASING STONES

You are invited to come forward and place your stone in one of the glass vases on the chancel. Through this act, we symbolically release our grief to God and ask God for help in this journey.

SCRIPTURE

Revelation 21: 4

Psalm 147: 3

Psalm 34: 18

PRAYER

SENDING

Go now in peace, trusting that you are loved, you are known, and you are not alone. Amen.

*POSTLUDE