

Matthew 11:28-29

²⁸ “Come to me, all you who are tired and are carrying heavy loads. I will give you rest. ²⁹ Become my servants and learn from me. I am gentle and free of pride. You will find rest for your souls.

Lighting of Individual Candles

Leader: Each of us comes bearing our own hurts, sorrows, broken places. I want to invite each of you to offer your personal wound to the God who loves each of us deeply and wants to carry our pain. God waits patiently, gently calling out: “Give me your pain, come to me... all who labor and are heavy laden, I will refresh you!”

I invite each of you to come forward and light a candle. As you light the candle, remember that it is God who lights a candle in our darkness and holds us close until we are able to shine.

“There is no path so dark, nor road so steep, nor hill so slippery that people have not been there before me and survived. May my dark times teach me to help the people I love on similar journeys. (Maggie Bedrosian)

Hymn “Hymn of Promise” (all) #707

Blessing

As we gather this evening, we embrace and claim the darkness that is present both in the world and in our own lives. As people who are familiar with the darkness, we also know that we gather to be illumined by the light of the Christ Child this Christmas season. May the Christ Child, born in a lowly stable, himself an outcast, bring light, comfort, peace, and joy this holiday season.

Asbury United Methodist Church
Blue Christmas Worship † Sunday, December 15, 2018

MAY THE
constant love
caring ^{OF} friends
SOFTEN YOUR SADNESS

MAY
cherished
memories
BRING YOU
moments of comfort

MAY
lasting peace
SURROUND YOUR
GRIEVING HEART

Preparing our hearts for Worship

Lynn Corrow, piano

Greeting

Opening Prayer (by Pastor)

Opening song "Precious Lord Take My Hand" (all) #474

Call to Worship

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow, a light has shown. For the yoke that was weighing upon them, and the burden upon their shoulders, you have broken in pieces, O God, our Redeemer.

Let us pray:

God of love and understanding, we gather here this evening to confront our pain in the midst of the world's celebration. Help us know that you are present with us in all of our moods and feelings and seasons. Grant us a taste of the hope, peace, joy, and love that you promise to all of your people through the gift of your son Jesus. AMEN.

First Candle:

Leader: The first candle we light to remember those persons whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their name, their voice, their face, the memory that binds them to us in this season. We hold them before God, giving thanks for their lives in ours.

Please take a moment to remember those who have died. I invite you to name them, aloud or in the silence of your hearts....

Second Candle:

Leader: The second candle we light is to redeem the pain of loss; the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs with the security they bring, the loss of health in ourselves or in family members, the loss of joy and peace in our lives from the stresses which surround us, the loss and loneliness we experience when our loved ones do not share our faith. As we gather up the pain of the past we offer it to you, O God, asking that into our open hands you will place the gift of peace.

Please take a moment to remember the losses. I invite you to name them, aloud or in the silence of your hearts....

Third Candle:

Leader: The third candle we light for those who experience a loss of direction in their lives.

God of the Exodus, you led Moses and your people through the wilderness to a new land. Hear our prayer. We want so much to have a sense of direction, to know where we are and where we ought to be headed. But the darkness and the questions stay. You ask us to be full of faith, to believe deep within that you are our signpost, that you are our wisdom and our guide, and to trust in your presence. Your words to us are clear: "Do not fear, I go before you."

Fourth Candle:

Leader: The fourth candle we light as a sign of hope, the hope that the Christmas story offers to us. We remember that God, who shares our life, promises us a place and time of no more pain and suffering.