



December 21, 2022



We exist to welcome ALL people by sharing the Love of Christ!

2601 Cages Bend Road • Gallatin, TN 37066 • (615) 822-3966
churchum@gmail.com • www.rehobothgallatin.org

PRELUDE

Gayle Graening

GATHER IN PRAYER

Tim Smith

All: God of mercy, hear our prayer this Advent season for ourselves and for our families who live with painful thoughts and memories of loss. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow and peace for the past. We ask these things in the name of you Christ who shares our life in joy and sorrow; death and new birth; despair and promise. Amen.

***HYMN**

Silent Night

UMH 239

OLD TESTAMENT READING

Isaiah 40:1-12

Tim Smith

NEW TESTAMENT READING

John 1:1-18

Rev. Sean Stanfield

REFLECTIONS

***HYMN**

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (v 1)

UMH #211

READING

Danny Tucker

“Rejoice, you who feel that you are lost; your Savior comes to seek and save you. Be of good cheer, you who are in prison, for he comes to set you free. You who are famished and ready to die, rejoice that he has consecrated for you a Bethlehem, a house of bread, and he has come to be the Bread of Life to your souls. Rejoice, O sinners everywhere, for the restorer of the castaways, the Savior of the fallen, is born.” – C.H. Spurgeon in “Joy Born at Bethlehem”

***HYMN**

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (v 2)

UMH #211

READING

Robin Stanfield

“Lord God, in the deepest night there rises the star of morning, of birth, the herald of a new day you are making, a day of great joy dawning in yet faint shafts of light and love. I hear whispers of peace in the stillness, fresh breezes of promise stirring, winter sparrows chirping of life, a baby’s cry of need and hope – Christmas! In the darkness I see the light and find in it comfort, confidence, cause for celebration, for the darkness cannot overcome it; and I rejoice to nourish it in myself, in other people, in the world for the sake of him in whom it was born and shines forever, even Jesus the Christ.” – Ted Loder in “Guerrillas of Grace”

***HYMN**

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (v 3)

UMH #211

READING

Mary D’Angelo

“We know full well that the work begun in the manger is not yet complete. Christmas is, for the time being, a feast of light juxtaposed with darkness. We brighten our sanctuary with candles, but the night persists beyond these walls. Though we wipe our tears away to join in yuletide celebration, we are still a people who mourn.”

– Katherine E. Willis Perchey in “A Feast Juxtaposed”

***HYMN**

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (v 4)

UMH #211

LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE

Rev. Sean Stanfield & Tim Smith

Leader: 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 while the first candle is lit)*

All: May God’s eternal love surround them.

Leader: 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 while the second candle is lit.)* 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.

Leader: This third candle we light is to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember these past weeks and month: 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 while the third candle is lit.)* We give thanks for all the support we have known.

All: Let us remember that dawn defeats darkness.

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

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

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Tim Smith

Leader: In the spirit of this season let us now confidently ask God for all the things we need; For ourselves as we participate in whatever way we can this Christmas. God hear our Prayer....

All: And in your mercy answer.

Leader: For our families and friends that they may continue to help and support us. God, hear our prayer....

All: And in your mercy answer.

Leader: For the person we have loved that has died. For all the losses that we know, that all may be redeemed by you Easter promise. God, hear our prayer.

All: And in your mercy answer.

Leader: For all our family and friends that they may know love and peace and happiness in you. God, hear our prayer.

All: And in your mercy answer.

Leader: For the peace proclaimed by the Christmas angels, to come throughout the whole world. God, hear our prayer.

All: And in your mercy answer.

Leader: God of great compassion and love, listen to the prayers of these your people. Grant to all, especially the bereaved and troubled ones this Christmas, the blessing we ask in the name of Christ who taught us to pray together saying: Our Father, who art in heaven . . .

BLUE TREE ORNAMENT REFLECTION

Rev. Sean Stanfield

*HYMN

Away in a Manger

UMH #217

FINAL PRAYER

Rev. Sean Stanfield

God, let all of us find some peaceful forgettings and peaceful remembering, a good friend to listen to our story again, and, at last, a still place within ourselves where we can discover that there is more in us than people who live their lives to weep.

All: Watch now, dear Lord, with those who wake or watch or weep tonight, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend to the sick ones, O Lord Christ, rest the weary ones, bless the dying ones, soothe the suffering ones, pity the afflicted ones, shield the joyous ones, and all for your love's sake. Amen. And now may the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

BENEDICTION

Rev. Sean Stanfield

POSTLUDE

Gayle Graening

*Please stand as you are able

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