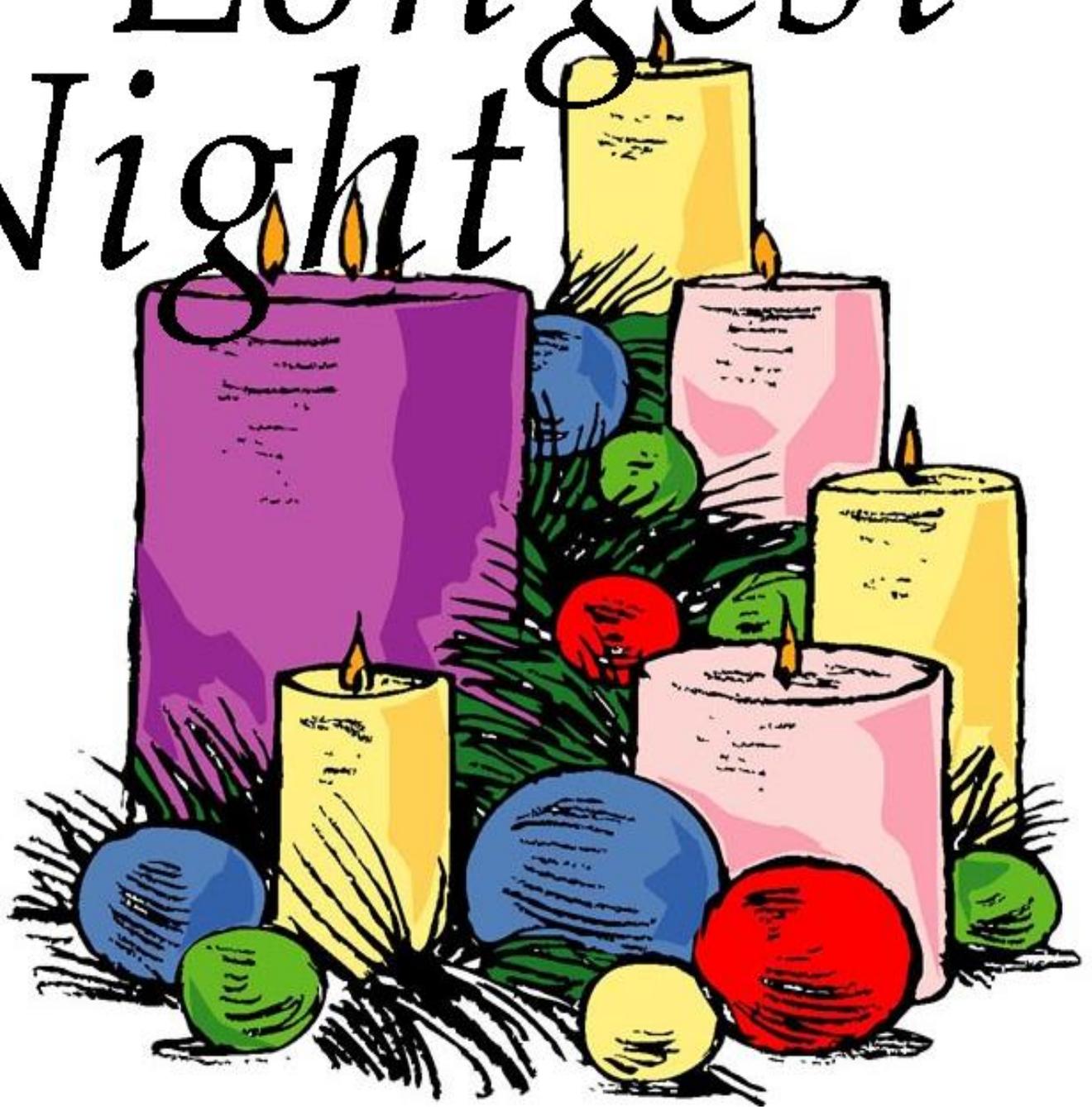


Longest Night



Thursday, December 20, 2018

7:00 p.m.

Falmouth Congregational Church United Church of Christ

An Open and Affirming Congregation

Rev. Michael Richards – Pastor and Teacher

WORDS OF WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

Pastor: In the midst of this season when we celebrate the hope of Christ's coming, we come together to share our grief.

All: The Word became flesh and lived among us, full of grace and truth.

Pastor: In the midst of this season when we celebrate the peace that Christ brings, we come together to acknowledge our pain.

All: All who receive Christ are given the power to become children of God.

Pastor: In the midst of this season when we celebrate the joy of Christ's coming, we come to name our fears.

All: What has come into being through Christ is life, and that life is the light of all people.

Pastor: In the midst of this season when we celebrate the love that Christ brings, we come together to be upheld in our struggles.

All: The light shines in the darkness and the darkness will not overcome it.

Pastor: Let us worship Emmanuel, God with us, in the midst of all the celebration and sorrow of this season.

INVOCATION

God of love and comfort, who promises us an end to all mourning, crying, and pain, be present with us now as we bring our struggles before You. As You became flesh, experiencing all the grief and joy of being human, living and dying among us in this troubled world, send now Your Holy Spirit, our comforter, to hold us in Your love as we acknowledge all the complex emotions that this season brings. With the lighting of these candles, may the light of Your presence shine among us and warm the bleak midwinter of our hearts. O come, Emmanuel, and fill the whole world with heaven's peace. Amen.

CAROL

"In the Bleak Midwinter"

Insert, v 1

FIRST CANDLE – GRIEF

We light the first candle to share our grief: grief over loved ones who have died, over relationships that have ended, over the many kinds of loss we have experienced. Often it is during these special holiday times, these times are filled with memories, that we feel most deeply the absence of those we have loved and lost. May this candle bring to light our grief.

SILENT MEDITATION

READ

JOHN 11:32-35

CAROL

"In the Bleak Midwinter"

Insert, v 2

SECOND CANDLE – PAIN

We light the second candle to acknowledge our pain: the pain of addiction; the pain of physical or mental illness; the pain of troubled relationships; the pain of depression – all the pain and burdens that we experience. In the midst of the joy of the Christmas season, we sometimes feel the need to hide the pain that we feel so that we won't burden others. May this candle bring light to our pain.

SILENT MEDITATION

READ

MATTHEW 11:28-29

CAROL

"In the Bleak Midwinter"

Insert, v 3

THIRD CANDLE – FEARS

We light the third candle to name our fears: fears of uncertainty, fears of being alone; fears of those who are not like us or whom we don't understand; fears of change or stagnation – all the fears that hold us back from living life to the fullest. Just as the shepherds, wise men, King Herod, Mary, and Joseph were filled with fear that first Christmas, so we too live in a world and a time that is filled with fear. May this candle bring to light our fears.

SILENT MEDITATION

READ

ISAIAH 41:8-10

CAROL

“In the Bleak Midwinter”

Insert, v 4

FOURTH CANDLE – STRUGGLE

We light the fourth candle to recognize the struggles of our world: the struggles of those who suffer the effects of war; the struggles of those who need food and shelter; the struggles of those who are fighting to survive diseases like AIDS and illnesses like cancer; the struggles of those who long for freedom from oppression; the struggles of those who are experiencing all that we have already named. We know that our own struggles are part of the struggles of a world desperately in need of God's promised realm of peace. May this candle bring light to our struggles.

SILENT MEDITATION

READ

REVELATION 21:1-6a

CAROL

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

Insert, v 1

TIME OF REMEMBRANCE AND PRAYER

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

In the midst of all that we have shared, acknowledged and named here, God is with us. We light this candle to remember that God has come and is coming into the world. The Light that is the life of all people shines, here and now, among us.

READ

JOHN 1 (selections)

SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

Leader: The peace of Christ be with you.

All: And also with you.

BLESSING

The life our Lord Jesus Christ, who lived and suffered and died for the sake of all suffering and hurting humans, yesterday, today, and tomorrow; the peace of God, which passes all understanding; and the presence of God's Holy Spirit supporting and encouraging you, be with you through this season of the longest night. Amen.

CAROL

“Silent Night, Holy Night”
(Please remain seated)

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