

Calvary Church

A Reconciling Congregation



*"To fashion an inner story of our pain
carries us into the heart of it, which
is where rebirth inevitably occurs."*

- Sue Monk Kidd

December 21, 2023

Winter Solstice

Blue Christmas

***You're invited to be in silence, as we transition
together into this sacred time and space.***

Gathering Song: "Arms of Love" (*Alexa Sunshine Rose*)

Greeting / Welcome

Breathing Our Way In / Breath Prayer

"For One Who Is Exhausted" (*John O'Donohue*)

Prayer (*Thom Shuman & All Saints Episcopal Church in Atlanta – adapted*)

Song: "Abide with Me" (*tune: W.H. Monk / lyrics: Henry F. Lyte - adapted*)

Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
the darkness deepens; (God), with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
earth's joys grow dim; its glories pass away;
change and decay in all around I see;
O (you) who changest not, abide with me.

Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
the darkness deepens; (God), with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

Scripture Lesson: Psalm 23

God is my shepherd; I shall not want. **2** God makes me lie down in green pastures; God leads me beside still waters; **3** God restores my soul. God leads me in right paths for God's name's sake.

4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. **5** You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows. **6** Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the HOLY ONE my whole life long.

Silent Prayer & Reflection

Scripture Lesson: Matthew 11:28-30

“Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Song: “Come to Me” (*Christopher Grundy*)

All who are weary,
all who are burdened down,
come to me, come to me,
come to me and I will give you rest.

My yoke is easy,
my burden feels so light.
Come to me, come to me
come to me and I will give you rest.

Prayer (*Steve Garnaas-Holmes – adapted*)

Silent Prayer & Reflection

Scripture Lesson: John 11:35

Jesus began to weep.

Ritual of Naming our Darkness, Claiming the Light

“Sending You Light” (*Melanie DeMore, with Julie Wolf*)

Silent Prayer & Reflection

Blessing: “For Suffering” (*John O’Donohue*)

Silent Prayer & Reflection

Scripture Lesson: Psalm 126

When the HOLY ONE restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. **2** Then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, "The HOLY ONE has done great things for them." **3** The HOLY ONE has done great things for us, and we rejoiced. **4** Restore our fortunes, O HOLY ONE, like the watercourses in the Negeb. **5** May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. **6** Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.

Prayer (*Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa – adapted*)

Silent Prayer & Reflection

Song: "Come Again, Poor Jesus" (*tune: Gustav Holst / lyrics: Steve Garnaas-Holmes – adapted*)

When our souls are wintry, when our hearts are cold,
come to us, dear Jesus, as you did of old.

When our hearts, unsheltered, feel the winds above,
come to us and warm us with your gentle love.

In the dark we wander, searching for our way,
waiting, lost, and longing for the light of day.

Dawn upon your children; fold us in your grace.
Child, be born among us. Show to us your face.

Shepherds on the hillside, poor, without a friend,
kept their watch in silence, vigil without end.

But then in the darkness, angels brought the word:
"God has not forgotten, and your prayers are heard."

To the simple, poor ones, Jesus came that night.
Come again, poor Jesus. Bless us with your light.

(Heart) of God, be with us in our joy and pain,
and companion us, Love, to new life again.

Departing Blessing

Singing Our Way Out: "Go Now in Peace" (*Natalie Sleeth*)

Go now in peace, go now in peace,
may the love of God surround you
everywhere, everywhere, you may go.

Postlude: "This Too Shall Pass" (*Olivia Fern*)

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"For One Who Is Exhausted" (*John O'Donohue*)

When the rhythm of the heart becomes hectic,
Time takes on the strain until it breaks;
Then all the unattended stress falls in
On the mind like an endless, increasing weight.

The light in the mind becomes dim.
Things you could take in your stride before
Now become laborsome events of will.

Weariness invades your spirit.
Gravity begins falling inside you,
Dragging down every bone.

The tide you never valued has gone out.
And you are marooned on unsure ground.
Something within you has closed down;
And you cannot push yourself back to life.

You have been forced to enter empty time.
The desire that drove you has relinquished.
There is nothing else to do not but rest
And patiently learn to receive the self
You have forsaken in the race of days.

At first your thinking will darken
And sadness take over like listless weather.
The flow of unwept tears will frighten you.
You have traveled too fast over false ground;
Now your soul has come to take you back.

Take refuge in your senses, open up
To all the small miracles you rushed through.

Become inclined to watch the way of rain
When it falls slow and free.

Imitate the habit of twilight,
Taking time to pen the well of color
That fostered the brightness of day.

Draw alongside the silence of stone
Until its calmness can claim you.
Be excessively gentle with yourself.

Stay clear of those vexed in spirit.
Learn to linger around someone of ease
Who feels they have all the time in the world.

Gradually, you will return to yourself,
Having learned a new respect for your heart
And the joy that dwells far within slow time.

“For Suffering” *(John O'Donohue)*

May you be blessed in the holy names of those
Who, without you knowing it,
Help to carry and lighten your pain.

May you know serenity
When you are called
To enter the house of suffering.

May a window of light always surprise you.

May you be granted the wisdom
To avoid false resistance;
When suffering knocks on the door of your life,

May you glimpse its eventual gifts.

May you be able to receive the fruits of suffering.

May memory bless and protect you
With the hard-earned light of past travail;
To remind you that you have survived before
And though the darkness now is deep,
You will soon see approaching light.

May the grace of time heal your wounds.

May you know that though the storm might rage,
Not a hair of your head will be harmed.

