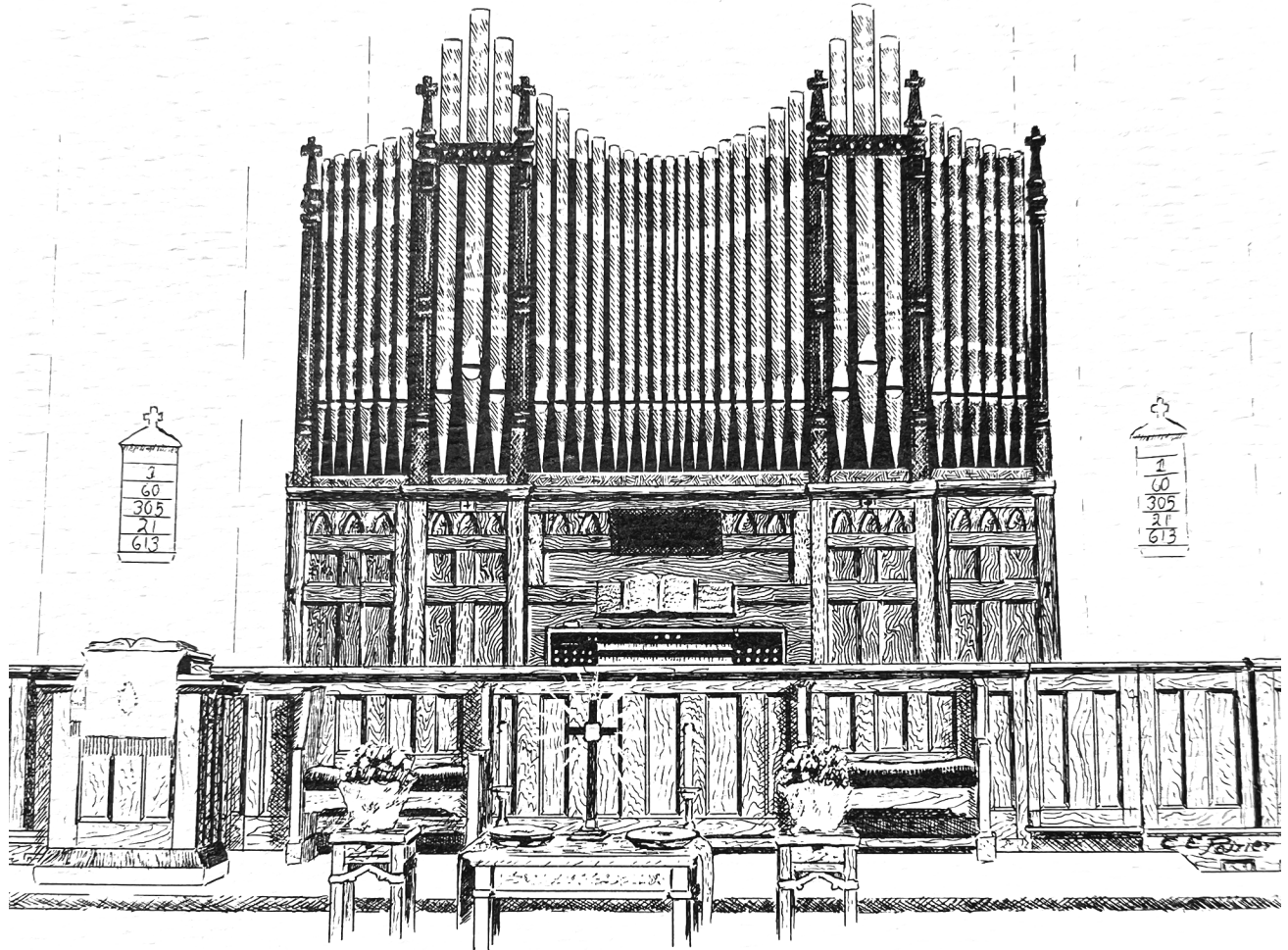


# FRANKLIN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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## Reaching Toward the Light

ON THE LONGEST NIGHT || DECEMBER 21, 2022

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# ORDER OF WORSHIP

† denotes when you are invited to stand, as you are able

## WELCOME

## PRELUDE

## CALL TO WORSHIP

The Pastor: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through the Word, and without the Word not one thing came into being. What has come into being was life, and the life was the light of all people.

The People: **The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not overtake it.**

## CAROL

### “Come, O Redeemer, Come”

No. 3046, *Worship & Song* (2011)

1.

*Father, enthroned on high, holy, holy;  
Ancient eternal Light, hear our prayer.*

#### Refrain

*Come, O Redeemer, come, grant us mercy.  
Come, O Redeemer, come, grant us peace.*

2.

*Lord, save us from the dark of our striving,  
Faithless and troubled hearts, weighed down.*

3.

*Look now upon our need, Lord, be with us.  
Heal us and make us free from our sin.*

#### Refrain

## SCRIPTURE

### Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

*New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition*

For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven:

<sup>2</sup> a time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to pluck up what is planted; <sup>3</sup> a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to break down and a time to build up; <sup>4</sup> a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance; <sup>5</sup> a time to throw away stones and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing; <sup>6</sup> a time to seek and a time to lose; a time to keep and a time to throw away; <sup>7</sup> a time to tear and a time to sew; a time to keep silent and a time to speak; <sup>8</sup> a time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace.

<sup>9</sup> What gain have the workers from their toil? <sup>10</sup> I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. <sup>11</sup> He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover, he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

## PSALTER

### adapted from Psalm 22:1-2, 4, 11, 19, 24, and Psalm 23

The Pastor: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

The People: **O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night but find no rest.**

The Pastor: In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them.  
**The People: Do not be far from me, for trouble is near, and there is no one to help.**

The Pastor: Do not be far from me, O God!  
**The People: O my help, come quickly to my aid!**

The Pastor: God does not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; God does not hide God's face from us but hears when we cry to God.

**The People: The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
he leads me beside still waters;  
he restores my soul.  
He leads me in right paths  
for his name's sake.**

**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.**

**You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
my whole life long.**

## SCRIPTURE

## Isaiah 40:1-8, 25, 28-31

*New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition*

Comfort, O comfort my people,  
says your God.  
<sup>2</sup> Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and cry to her  
that she has served her term,  
that her penalty is paid,  
that she has received from the LORD's hand  
double for all her sins.

<sup>3</sup> A voice cries out:  
"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.  
<sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.  
<sup>5</sup> Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,  
and all flesh shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

<sup>6</sup> A voice says, "Cry out!"  
And I said, "What shall I cry?"  
All flesh is grass;  
their constancy is like the flower of the field.  
<sup>7</sup> The grass withers; the flower fades,  
<sup>8</sup> but the word of our God will stand forever.

<sup>25</sup> To whom, then, will you compare me,  
or who is my equal? says the Holy One.

28 Have you not known? Have you not heard?  
 The LORD is the everlasting God,  
 the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
 He does not faint or grow weary;  
 his understanding is unsearchable.  
 29 He gives power to the faint  
 and strengthens the powerless.  
 30 Even youths will faint and be weary,  
 and the young will fall exhausted,  
 31 but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength;  
 they shall mount up with wings like eagles;  
 they shall run and not be weary;  
 they shall walk and not faint.

## CAROL

## “Toda la Tierra (All Earth is Waiting)”

No. 210, *The United Methodist Hymnal* (1989)

1.

*All earth is waiting to see the Promised One,  
 And the open furrows, the sowing of the Lord.  
 All the world, bound and struggling, seeks true liberty;  
 It cries out for justice and searches for the truth.*

3.

*Mountains and valleys will have to be made plain;  
 Open new highways, new highways for the Lord.  
 He is now coming closer, so come all and see,  
 And open the doorways as wide as wide can be.*

2.

*Thus says the prophet to those of Israel,  
 “A virgin mother will bear Emmanuel,”  
 For his name is “God with us,” our brother shall be,  
 With him hope will blossom once more within our hearts.*

3.

*In lowly stable the Promised One appeared,  
 Yet, feel his presence throughout the earth today,  
 For he lives in all Christians and is with us now;  
 Again, with his coming he brings us liberty.*

## LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE

*The first candle is lit.*

**The Pastor:** We light this first candle to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember clearly, their faces, their voices, their bodies. We embrace and give thanks for the memories that bind them to us in this season of expectation, when all Creation waits for the Light.

**The People:** **We remember them with love. May God’s eternal love surround them.**

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” No. 211, v.1, *The United Methodist Hymnal* (1989)

***O come, O come, Immanuel, and ransom captive Israel  
 that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.  
 Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.***

Silent reflection. The second candle is lit.

**The Pastor:** We light this second candle to remember the pain of loss: loss of relationships, loss of trust, loss of jobs, loss of health, loss of faith, the loss of joy. We acknowledge and embrace the pain of the past, O God, and we offer it to You, asking that into our wounded hearts and open hands You will place the gift of peace, shalom.

**The People:** **We remember that through You all things are possible. Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into Your future.**

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” No. 211, v.2, *The United Methodist Hymnal* (1989)

***O come, thou Wisdom from on high, and order all things far and nigh;  
 to us the path of knowledge show and cause us in her ways to go.  
 Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.***

Silent reflection. The third candle is lit.

The Pastor: We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and for some of us years, that have been heavy with our burdens. We accept and lay before you, God, the sharpness of memory, the sadness and grief, the hurt and fear, the anger and pain. We accept and lay before you the ways we feel we have fallen short, and the times we have been spent blaming ourselves, and you, for all that we have suffered. We accept and lay before you the time we have walked alone, in darkness; and in knowledge of our own mortality.

**The People:** **We remember that though we have journeyed far, and that, while lost, we may have turned away from the light, the light itself has not failed. We remember that though winter be upon us and though the night be dark, with the turning of the Wheel the dawn will come, and dawn defeats the darkness.**

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” No. 211, v.6, *The United Methodist Hymnal* (1989)

***O come thou Dayspring, come and cheer, our spirits by thy justice here  
disperse the gloomy clouds of night and death’s dark shadows put to flight.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.***

Silent reflection. The fourth candle is lit.

The Pastor: We light this fourth candle to remember faith, the gift of light and hope that God offers to us in the stories of Hanukkah and of Christmas, which both also began in abandonment, insecurity, and humbleness, in time of war and in a poor stable. We remember that the loving God who kept the light shining in the temple and who came to share this life with us promises us comfort and peace.

**The People:** **We remember the One who shares our burdens, who shows us the way to the Light, and who journeys with us into all our tomorrows.**

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” No. 211, v.7, *The United Methodist Hymnal* (1989)

***O come, Desire of nations bind all peoples in one heart and mind.  
From dust thou brought us forth to life; deliver us from earthly strife.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.***

Silent reflection.

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

The Liturgist: God of wisdom, we come to you this Christmas Season tired, in turmoil, and in pain. As the nights have grown longer, so has darkness grown and wrapped itself around our hearts. In this season of longest night, we ask your healing blessings upon all that we carry in our hearts—sorrow we fear may never end, wounds we cannot even put into words. Lord, hear our prayer.

**The People:** **And in Your merciful love, answer.**

The Liturgist: God of mercy and compassion, there are those among us who are grieving over what might have been. Death or loss or terrible hurt has changed our experience of Christmas. We remember that once it was a special day for us, too, but someone or something precious has gone away from us in this life. We have lost a beloved, a job, a goal, a cause, a dream. We find ourselves adrift and alone. We are weary from the journey, and we have found no room at the inn. We come to you seeking rest, and peace, and shelter from the storm. Lord, hear our prayer.

**The People:** **And in Your merciful love, answer.**

The Liturgist: God of grace, in the spirit of the season, grant us all that we need to comfort us as we journey through this Christmas season. We ask that you shelter and sustain all those of us, both here and throughout the world, who wander or want or weep or are heavy laden, that we may be lifted up in courage and journey on in Thy peace. Lord, hear our prayer.

**The People:** **And in Your merciful love, answer.**

The Liturgist: God of love, in this Christmas Season we embrace and offer up to you all that used to be which is now lost to us, and cannot be again. With celebration all around us, memories of what was, and fears of what may be, weigh heavy on our hearts.

Please hold us close in your embrace, be near to us this night, until the light returns and morning comes. Lord, hear our prayer.

**The People:**  
The Pastor:

**And in Your merciful love, answer.**

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give thine angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for thy love's sake.

**The People:** Amen.

## CAROL

## “Star-Child”

No. 2095, *The Faith We Sing* (2001)

1.

*Star-Child earth-Child go-between of God,  
love Child, Christ Child, heaven's lightning rod,*

**Refrain**

*This year, this year, let the day arrive  
when Christmas comes for everyone, everyone alive!*

2.

*Street child, beat child, no place left to go,  
hurt child, used child, no one wants to know,*

**Refrain**

3.

*Grown child, old child, memory full of years,  
sad child, lost child, story told in tears,*

**Refrain**

4.

*Spared child, spoiled child, having wanting more,  
wise child, faith child, knowing joy in store,*

**Refrain**

5.

*Hope-for-peace Child, God's stupendous sign,  
down-to-earth Child, Stars of stars that shine,*

**Refrain**

## GOSPEL READING

## Luke 2:1-7

*New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition*

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 All went to their own towns to be registered. 4 Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. 5 He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room

## OFFERING OF LIGHT

The Pastor: One story we celebrate in this season tells how a few brave fighters, defending their temple, had only enough oil to light the sacred lamp for one day, but it burned eight days until relief arrived. Another story tells how in a little town a homeless couple with tax problems took shelter in a stable among the animals and gave birth to a light that would change the world.

Let us pray.

**The People:** Gentle God of love, help us reach out together for the light of faith, for renewal and recovery and a new day coming. Grant that hope may come to rest in our hearts, and let it go forth with us into the darkness, this night and in the nights to come, until we see the dawn.

The Pastor: Lighten our darkness, we beseech you, O God; give us light in the night season; and by your great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night. Amen.

The Christmas Tree is lit. As “Let Us Light a Candle in the Darkness” is sung, the people in the sanctuary may come forward to light a candle. People at home are invited to light a candle in their worship space. The pastor continues:

Let us pray.  
**The People:** **Almighty God, we thank you for your constant love and for the blessings of this day. We know that even when we cannot see or feel you, still you are there. Help us to remember you and to listen for your voice in the words of family, friends, and strangers. Kindle our hearts and awaken hope, that we may know you as you reveal yourself in the world and in our lives. Let the light of your Holy Spirit shine like these candles in the darkness, lighting the way for all who feel despairing, lost, or forgotten, and grant that it may come to dwell so deeply in our hearts that when we leave this place it may shine on, for us and for those we meet along the way. Amen.**

## CAROL

## “Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light”

No. 223, *The United Methodist Church* (1989)

1.  
*Break forth, O beauteous heavenly light,  
and usher in the morning;  
O shepherds, shrink not with affright,  
but hear the angel's warning.  
This child, now weak in infancy,  
our confidence and joy shall be,  
The power of Satan breaking,  
our peace eternal making.*

2.  
*This night of wonder, night of joy,  
was born the Christ, our brother;  
He comes, not mighty to destroy,  
to bid us love each other.  
How could he quit his kingly state  
for such a world of greed and hate?  
What deep humiliation  
secured the world's salvation!*

3.  
*Come, dearest child, into our hearts,  
and leave your crib behind you!  
Let this be where the new life starts  
for all who seek and find you.  
To you the honor, thanks, and praise,  
for all your gifts this time of grace;  
Come, conquer and deliver  
this world, and us, forever.*

## CONCLUDING PRAYERS

The Pastor: Let us pray.  
**The People:** **Another day will come, O God. I know not what it may bring forth, but make me ready, God, for whatever it may be. If I am to stand up, help me to stand bravely. If I am to sit still, help me to sit quietly. If I am to lie low, help me to do it patiently. And if I am to do nothing, help me do it gallantly. Make these words more than words, and give me the Spirit of thy Peace. Amen.**  
The Pastor: O God, support us all the day long in this troubled life, until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then, Lord, in thy mercy, grant us safe lodging, and the holy rest, and peace at the last. Amen.

## BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

The Pastor: The Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you;  
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you,  
and give you peace, both now and forever more. Amen.  
The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
**The People:** **And also with you.**

People are invited to greet one another with the peace of Christ.

## POSTLUDE

# WELCOME TO FRANKLIN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH!

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Thank you for joining us for worship. We hope that you have found, in our community, a place to experience meaningful relationship with God, grow in Christ, and reach out in love to others. We hope that this community has been a place where you feel welcome, acceptance, and love. If you have questions about the church, or are interested in becoming a member of the church, please feel free to contact any of the leaders listed below.

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Allen Smith, Chair of Personnel Committee  
Rich Pokorny, Chair of Resource Committee  
Inger Anderson, Chair of Committee on Ministry

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This “Blue Christmas” service is adapted from an order developed and used at The Cathedral Church of Saint Andrew, Honolulu, Hawaii.

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