

# Blue Christmas

December 21, 2025 5:00 p.m.

\*Congregation is invited to rise if able and comfortable.  
Readings in **BOLD** are to be read in unison.

Hymnals: **UMH is Red or Purple-TFWS is Black-W&S is Green**  
*Please note that this service is being recorded and viewed on social media.*

*Welcome! If you are a visitor, we greet you in Christ's name.  
If you are worried, we offer you the Peace of Christ.  
If you are lonely, we welcome you into the family of God.  
If you are grieving, we embrace you in the comfort of God's love.  
If you are struggling to understand life's future and purpose,  
we offer the Gospel of Christ to illuminate your life journey.*

## WE APPROACH GOD

PRELUDE *Away in a Manger* arr. Tonioli

INTROIT *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus* UMH 196, vs.1  
**Come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;  
from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.  
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;  
dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.**

## WORDS OF WELCOME

\*INVITATION TO WORSHIP Adapted from C. Sine  
On this longest night,  
we kneel in the darkness and await God's light to emerge.  
**On this longest night, we wait for the One  
who hears our cries and shoulders our sufferings.**  
Tonight, we anticipate the coming of the One who brings  
comfort and wholeness.  
**Tonight, we wait with hope-filled hearts, for the Babe of  
Bethlehem.**

\*HYMN OF INVITATION *In the Bleak Midwinter* UMH 221, vs. 1-2

## EVENING PRAYER FOR COMFORT

Gentle God, all around us are the sights and sounds of Christmas,  
the laughter of parties, the songs of carolers,  
the music in every store.

But deep within us we carry our pain,  
our grief walks with us every step we take,  
and loneliness is a shawl  
we drape over our shoulders on empty nights.

**So, in this time when every night stretches into eternity,  
we come to you, bringing our gifts:  
not gold, frankincense, and myrrh,  
but the grief that is the empty space  
in the closet filled with memories,**

**the loss that is a sore which never heals,  
the bitterness that tastes like two-day old coffee.**

In a season when so many people don't have enough hours in a  
day to get their lists checked off, their cards mailed, their presents  
wrapped, we have all the time in the world:

**to remember the loss that has stolen the joy of the season;  
to grieve over a job, a dream, a loved one we have lost;  
to sit in the shadows of our homes,  
too weary to turn on the lights;  
to wander the streets lit by decorations on all the houses,  
but not by the Light of the world.**

Our fear of the future, our remembrance of the past;  
our pain which is difficult to bear and harder to release;  
our emptiness which cannot be filled with platitudes;  
our hands which cannot hold the ones we wish to embrace:  
all this makes a season of long nights.

**So, be with us in our loneliness, in our longing,  
in our loss, in our lives. Amen.**

SPECIAL MUSIC *Shoulders* Smallbone & Glover  
Lydia Smith, soloist

## LIGHTING OUR DARKNESS

We light our first candle:  
a single light that the deepest darkness cannot conquer –  
small, insignificant – but a sign of hope.

**Let it speak to us of the tiny flame of hope buried within us –  
the stubborn little light that refuses to be extinguished  
by all that life has thrown at it.**

We light our second candle:  
a companion to the first – equally small, equally  
insignificant – but witnessing to hope that another light  
brings.

**Let it speak to us of the lights of companionship –  
of our families and our friends - of strangers  
and kindnesses found in unexpected places  
that restored our hope in human nature.**

We light our third candle:  
recalling nights of watching and waiting – sleepless,  
anxious – when dawn seemed to ebb further from the  
horizon and hope seemed forlorn.

**Let it speak to us of the sureness of morning –  
of the passing of the darkness of suffering –  
and the promise of an eternal sunrise dawning for those  
we have loved and lost and dawning too for us – though  
we may yet be in that darkest hour before the dawn.**

We light our fourth candle:  
marking the closing of the Advent season and the  
immediacy of Christmas –a time of peace and joy we may  
not ourselves feel able to welcome – as our spirits dwell in  
dark and wintriness.

**Let it speak to us of hope – of being together in this place of  
healing and wholeness held eternally in the hand of the  
One who brought light into being and who knows each  
one of us by name.**

## LIGHT OF CHRIST

Into the dark space of this longest night, we light the Christ  
candle – though it is not yet Christmas, the light of Christ still  
shines in our world, bringing hope where there is despair. Peace  
where there is unrest. Love where there is loss.

When we feel as if our light is dimmed, we can rely on the Holy  
Light to continue to shine until we ourselves shine brightly once  
more.

The Light of Christ stands here in the center of the candles that  
represent some of life's joy and pain. This central candle of light  
is Emmanuel, God with us, in the midst of it all.

Jesus, who was born a helpless child in an insignificant town  
amid the smells and sounds of a stable; hears our cries,  
understands how weak and helpless we can feel, knows our  
hearts, and offers us healing and hope in the midst of our  
suffering.

*"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned."*

## CANDLELIGHT PRAYER

**Comforting God, wrap us in your presence in this time of prayer.  
With these candles, help us find your light, a light that will guide  
us day-by-day, step by step, as we try to live life fully and  
wholly. We cherish the space we have this night to name our  
journey. Now comfort us. Encourage us. Empower us. Amen.**

SPECIAL MUSIC *Light of the World* Daigle  
Lydia Smith, soloist

## We Listen for God's Promise

## CENTERING MOMENT

Speak to us in the Scriptures, Lord.  
Speak to us in the waiting, the watching, the hoping, the longing,  
the sorrow, the sighing, the rejoicing.  
**Speak to us by your Word in these long days,  
and walk with us until the day of your coming. Amen.**

INVITATION TO BETHLEHEM *What Brings You To Bethlehem?*

PROPHETIC LESSON *Micah 5: 2, 4, 5a*

REFLECTION *Bethlehem: An Insignificant Place*



## **We Respond In Faith**

All who wish to come forward and light a candle to bring light into the world on this longest night of darkness, are invited to do so. In doing so, may we reflect and remember our friends and family who have welcomed the Christ child and light into our lives and into the world.

## PRAYER FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

## \*SENDING FORTH

**Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King,  
born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.  
By thine own eternal spirit rule in all our hearts alone;  
by thine all sufficient merit, raise us to thy glorious throne.**

***Our Service of Worship Has Ended  
Our Worship Through Service Begins***

## Words of Welcome

Welcome to this service of worship with the First UMC. If we can be of service to you in any way, please let us know. If you are looking for a church to call home, please consider joining together with us, where we seek to help each other grow in faith, in love, and in service.

Christmas Eve: Wed. Dec. 24<sup>th</sup>  
*Silent Night, Holy Night*

5:00 p.m.      **Family Candlelight Service**  
*At First UMC, 103 Monmouth Road t.*

7:30 p.m.      **Traditional Candlelight Service**  
*At Old First UMC, 197 Locust Road*

11:00 p.m.      **First UMC**  
**Candlelight & Communion Service**



# All Are Invited & Welcome

Hosted by Old First UMC & FUMCO

+++++



The congregation will be having a diaper drive, for Maker's Place, a GNJ Mission

Site. This drive will support low-income families in the Trenton area. For every diaper brought to the manger of the newborn Jesus, Pastor Jill will match the number of diapers received by Epiphany, Sunday, January 4th, 2026.



*Comfort, comfort my people.....*  
*Isaiah 40:1*

# First UMC of Oakhurst

*...is a community of faith committed to Christ, seeking to learn the needs of others and responding with Christian love.*

**9:30 a.m. Worship Every Sunday Morning In Person & Streaming**  
**103 Monmouth Road, Oakhurst, NJ 07755**  
**732-531-1150**

[FUMCOakhurst@outlook.com](mailto:FUMCOakhurst@outlook.com)  
[Oakhurst.umcchurches.org](http://Oakhurst.umcchurches.org)

Like us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FUMCOakhurst>

**Follow us on YouTube:**

<https://www.youtube.com/c/FirstUnitedMethodistChurchofOakhurst>

CCLI #1588788