



**First United Methodist Church  
Andover, Downtown, Offerings**

A Service of Hope, Strength, and Love

**December 21, 2024**

# A Service of Hope, Strength, and Love

December 21, 2024

WELCOME

HYMN

## ***All Who Are Thirsty***

All who are thirsty  
All who are weak  
Come to the fountain  
Dip your heart in the stream of life  
Let the pain and the sorrow  
Be washed away  
In the waves of His mercy  
As deep cries out to deep

(We sing)

Come Lord Jesus come  
Come Lord Jesus come  
Come Lord Jesus come  
Come Lord Jesus come

CALL TO WORSHIP

From Every Moment Holy, Volume II

Leader: O God who fights for me, be present in my confusion.  
Be present in my uncertain distress.

**People: Be present in my passage through denial, anger, frustration, and fear.**

Leader: Shepherd me through every anxiety and hold those who help carry me.

**People: Be near in ways that I can sense and know You. Convince me of your care. Be my everlasting rock, my fortress, my defender.**

OPENING PRAYER

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

Leader: 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.

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

**O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here, until the son of God appear.**

**Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

Leader: 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.

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

**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, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

Leader: 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 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.

**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, 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 Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

Leader: We light this fourth candle to remember faith, the gift of light and hope that God offers to us in the story of Christmas, which both also began in abandonment, insecurity, and humbleness, in a 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.

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

Leader: We light the Christ candle to remember the one who is  
light, that darkness cannot overcome. We remember  
Jesus who, suffered himself, and suffers alongside us.  
We light this candle in the darkness of our own grief,  
experiencing the light and warmth of this candle and the  
Christ, who brings us hope, light, and warmth.

**People: Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee,  
O Israel.**

\* SCRIPTURE READING

John 11: 28-44, NRSV

MEDITATION

***A Savior Who Weeps***

INVITATION TO THE TABLE

Pages 7-8

THE GREAT THANKGIVING

Pages 9-10

SHARING OF THE BREAD AND CUP

TIME OF PRAYER AND CANDLE LIGHTING

HYMN

***Drive Out the Darkness***

Chorus: Come O come be our light  
Drive out the darkness  
Come Jesus come

Ev'ry year under the thorn  
Ev'ry wrong that we have known  
Ev'ry valley will be raised  
The ancient ruins will be remade.

Chorus

Ev'ry weapon made for war  
Ev'ry gun and ev'ry sword  
Will be melted in the flame  
To be used for gardening

Chorus

In the emptiness of grief  
Through the night of suffering  
Ev'ry loss and in the tears  
God our comfort O be near

Chorus

Come O come be our light  
Drive out the darkness  
Come and end all the violence  
Come and do not be silent  
Come we cling to Your promise  
Come You'll break all injustice  
Come Jesus come

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

HYMN NO. 221

*In the Bleak Midwinter*

BENEDICTION

\* Please stand as you are able.

LEADERS OF WORSHIP IN TODAY'S SERVICE

Liturgists: Rev. Carol Cooper, Downtown Pastor  
Kayla Mattox-Frye, Offerings Assistant Pastor  
Rev. Dr. Todd Nelson, Senior Pastor  
Rev. Taylor Zimmerman, Offerings Pastor  
Music: Sarah McGinnis, Director of Media and Design  
Preacher: Rev. Kyle Long, UK Healthcare Hospital Chaplain

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We gather each year for our Longest Night service to recognize our complex feelings of grief, lament, and sorrow during a season where the world seems to only rejoice. We know that grief does not end with the Christmas season. If sorrow and grief are overwhelming for you and appear to be staying for the long haul, we'd love to journey alongside you after this service. First UMC offers spiritual training and clinical counseling to help you to process through these complex feelings and achieve a place of peace. Reach out to your community pastor to get connected.

One way we care for one another in our grief is through GriefShare groups that meet at different times throughout the year. GriefShare is a Christ Centered, Bible Based program for adults who are grieving the loss of a loved one. It does not need to be a recent loss. The 13-week program has a layered approach that includes: a participant book, videos, discussion and home work. The sessions are two hours in length. A new group will begin in late January or early February and if you are interested, please email Tyler Mattox-Frye ([tyler@lextogether.org](mailto:tyler@lextogether.org)).

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