



Insisting on Hope

December 14, 2025

Service of Comfort & Rest

WELCOME TO SAINT LUKE'S!
DECEMBER 14, 2025
SERVICE OF COMFORT & REST

In Preparation for Worship

We gather here this evening for comfort and rest from all that might overwhelm us. We will light candles and pray deeply. We will give ourselves permission to simply be – or to rest – or to wrestle with darkness, and to comfort each other and hold faith for one another.

Prelude

Silent Night
arr. Jim Brickman

Welcome

Shannon Dill

Call to Worship

Leader: Even through the longest nights,
People: We keep watch for the light.
Leader: When days are long and we grow weary,
People: We keep watch for times of rest.
Leader: When we're running out of hope,
People: We keep watch for times of hope.
Leader: When peace feels distant,
People: We keep watch for its coming.
Leader: When joy seems like a luxury we can't afford,
People: We keep watch for the opportunity.
Leader: When the world is more full of hate than love,
People: We keep watch for the chance to share love.
Leader: When we're desperate for Christ, Emmanuel, God-With-Us,
People: We keep watch for his coming.
Leader: Let us keep watch, for God is surely with us.

Hymn* 850

In a Deep, Unbounded Darkness

Call to Prayer*

David Lower

Leader: The Lord be with you.
People: And also with you.
Leader: Let us pray.

God of mercy, hear our prayer in this Advent season for ourselves, and for our families and friends who live with the struggles of illness or the pain of loss. We pray for those who need light and comfort in their lives. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow, and peace for the past. We ask these things in the name of Christ, who shares our life in joy and sorrow, death and new birth, despair and promise. Amen.

Stories of Light and Words of God's Promises

The candle lighting service includes the lighting of memorial candles along with scripture readings, each followed by a congregational response and a musical response.

As each candle is lit, we are reminded that in the midst of darkness, light will shine.

Exodus 13:17-22

When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was nearer; for God thought, "If the people face war, they may change their minds and return to Egypt." So God led the people by the roundabout way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea. The Israelites went up out of the land of Egypt prepared for battle. And Moses took with him the bones of Joseph who had required a solemn oath of the Israelites, saying, "God will surely take notice of you, and then you must carry my bones with you from here." They set out from Succoth, and camped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness. The Lord went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

Leader: We light this first candle to remember that God promises to lead us out of the wilderness and darkness. We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and for some of us years, that have been heavy with our burdens.

All: We remember that though we have journeyed far, the light itself has not failed.

Music

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel
arr. Mark Hayes

Jen Weier

Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.
He who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is your keeper;
the Lord is your shade at your right hand.
The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.
The Lord will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.
The Lord will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.

Leader: We light this second candle to remember God's faithfulness and to lay before God the sharpness of memory, the sadness and grief, the hurt and fear, the anger and pain. We lay before God the time we have walked alone, in darkness; and in knowledge of our own mortality.

All: We remember that though we have journeyed far, the light goes with us.

Music

To the Hill I Lift My Eyes

Kimberly Waters

To the hills I lift my eyes longing to know
where, O where will my help come from? Where, o where?
My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.
God the Creator will keep my life. God is my help.

Isaiah 9:2-7

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness —
on them light has shined.
You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.
For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.
For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Leader: We light this third 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,
and even hope. We acknowledge and embrace the pain of the past and we offer it to God,
asking that into our wounded hearts and open hands God will place the gift of peace.

All: We remember that through our gracious God, all things are possible.

MusicIn the Bleak Midwinter
arr. Phil Perkins

Jen Weier

Luke 2:8-19

Shannon Dill

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

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

All: 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.

Music

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

Kimberly Waters

Infant holy, infant lowly,
for his bed a cattle stall;
oxen lowing, little knowing
Christ the babe is Lord of all.
Swift are winging
angels singing,
noels ringing,
tidings bringing:
Christ the babe is Lord of all!
Christ the babe is Lord of all!

Flocks were sleeping; shepherds keeping
vigil till the morning new
saw the glory, heard the story,
tidings of the gospel true.
Thus rejoicing,
free from sorrow,
praises voicing
greet the morrow:
Christ the babe was born for you!
Christ the babe was born for you!

Unison Prayer

Loving God, hear our prayers and remind us that by your grace, mercy and love light will shine in the midst of darkness. We ask all these things in the strong name of Jesus. Amen.

The Lord's Supper and Invitation to Light Candles

If you would like to be served where you are sitting, please raise your hand. Everyone is invited to participate in the sacrament. Children who have discussed the sacrament with their parents and/or a pastor are welcome. The cup holds grape juice, not wine, during this service. A server with gluten-free wafers will be standing directly in front of the communion table for those who prefer this option.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Communion Music

Still, Still, Still

Kimberly Waters

Intercession for Healing and Wholeness

Leader: Time after time, the angels break in with a greeting:

People: "Do not fear."

Leader: So when our days are heavy and our sleep grows restless,

People: We believe that God is near.

Leader: When fear feels greater than hope,

People: We'll look for signs of new life;

We'll take a step toward God with shaking knees;

Leader: We'll stand together,

People: And we won't let fear stop us.

Leader: When we're desperate for Christ, Emmanuel, God-With-Us, we'll remember:

People: We are the hands and feet of Christ,

Leader: Made in God's own image,

People: Called to be light-bearers in a fearful world.

Leader: For we know that, no matter how it may seem,

People: God is here, among us, even now. Amen.

Hymn* 543

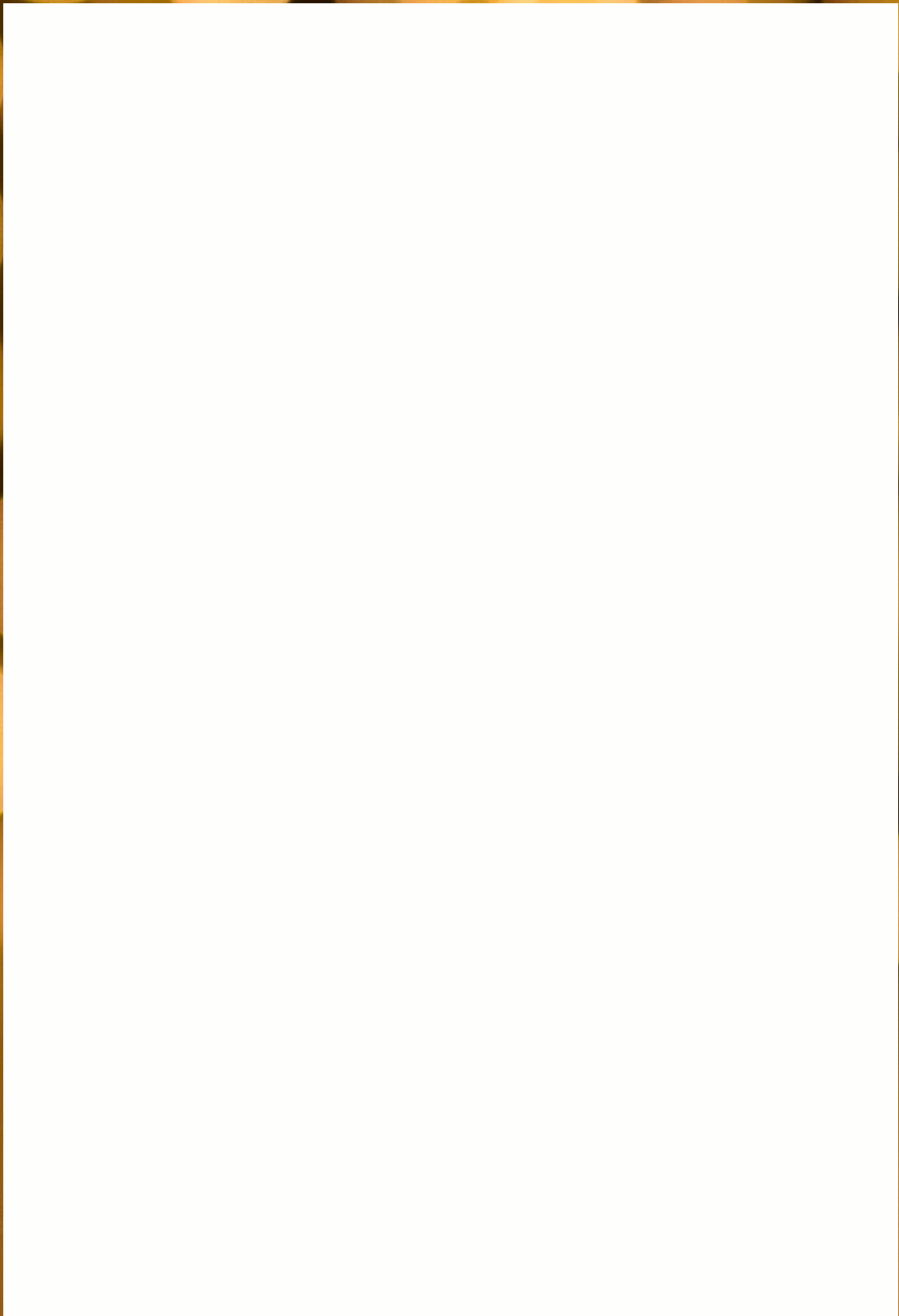
God, Be the Love to Search and Keep Me

Benediction*

Postlude*

The First Noel
arr. John Carter

Jen Weier





SAINT LUKE'S
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH