



The Longest Night:
Reflecting on Our Journey Together
December 21. 2024
Worship – 3:00 PM

Words of Welcome

"It is the mission of the Community Reformed Church of Colonie to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, with all our souls and with all of our minds; and to love our neighbors as ourselves." (Matthew 22:37-40)

We are a community bound together and energized by faith, love, and commitment to Jesus Christ. And even though you may not yet share that faith, love, and commitment, you are most welcome to be with us, to belong here, to experience what we're about. Then, if you are attracted and persuaded by what you see and hear, we hope you'll want to set down roots here long-term. And even if you don't, you'll always be a friend.

The Community Reformed Church of Colonie welcomes you
and thanks you for worshipping with us.

Please join in the worship liturgy by reading the sections in ***bold italics***.

* - Please rise in body or in spirit

PRELUDE "Of the Father's Love Begotten"

FOR CONTEMPLATION

A First Coming

God did not wait till the world was ready,
till....nations were at peace.
God came when the Heavens were unsteady,
and prisoners cried out for release.
God did not wait for the perfect time.
God came when the need was deep and great.
God dined with sinners in all their grime,
turned water into wine. God did not wait
till hearts were pure. In joy God came
to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.
To a world like ours, of anguished shame
God came, and God's light would not go out.
God came to a world which did not mesh,
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh
the Maker of the stars was born.
We cannot wait till the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,
God came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!

By Madeline L'Engle

WELCOME

PASSING THE PEACE

In his letter to the Philippian congregation, St. Paul encouraged them to, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts since as members of one body you were called to peace.” He’s talking about two places where peace should dwell. One within the heart and soul of each member where they will know and experience God’s peace in and for themselves no matter what was going on around them. The other peace he is talking about is that peace that they share with and for one another. The harmony and unity and support they gave one another as they lived and worked together.

In the same spirit and with his full desire, I greet you:
The peace of Christ be with you.
And also with you.

Let us greet one another with a sign of peace.

THE LITUGY OF THE ADVENT CANDLES

Even in our endings,
fill us with hope for new beginnings.

Even as our minds race with anxiety,
fill us with peace that surpasses understanding.

Even in our deepest grief,
fill us with joy and laughter.

Even in a world of hate and fear,
fill us with your love, O God.

Come, let us worship Emmanuel, God with us.

HYMN 542 "Near to the Heart of God"

542 Near to the Heart of God

Come near to God and he will come near to you. Jas. 4:8



1. There is a place of qui - et rest near to the heart of God,
2. There is a place of com - fort sweet near to the heart of God,
3. There is a place of full re - lease near to the heart of God,



a place where sin can - not mo - lest, near to the heart of God.
a place where we our Sav - ior meet, near to the heart of God.
a place where all is joy and peace, near to the heart of God.

Refrain



O Je - sus, blest Re - deem - er, sent from the heart of God,



hold us who wait be - fore thee near to the heart of God.

WORDS and MUSIC: Cleland B. McAfee, 1901

McAFEE
C.M.Ref.

SCRIPTURE LESSON Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.

This is the Word of The Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

TIME OF REFLECTION & SILENT PRAYER

TAIZE RESPONSE "I Belong to You, O God" (3 times)

*I belong to you, O God, I belong to you.
I belong to you, O God, I belong to you.*

SCRIPTURE LESSON Ephesians 2:13-22

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

GUIDED MEDITATION

TIME OF REFLECTION AND SILENT PRAYER

1. Take a few moments to write a prayer or a reflection about this experience. Perhaps giving thanks to God for that person or the people who were influential in your welcome to this new home.
2. Take a few moments in reflection about how you were nurtured to discover the gifts God has given you and how you were encouraged to use them in the church and for the community in which we minister.
How much time and effort was invested in this process? Who participated in it? After reflection, write a prayer or some kind of appreciation about the nurture you received and how blessed you and the church have been through it.
3. Let us take a few moments to reflect on our calling in the world and how our congregational traditions of worship and outreach and fellowship have empowered us to carry on that mission. How might we expand on those traditions in new ways to address the ever changing ideas and attitudes of our world? Who might be able to help and guide us in this transition? After reflection, write a prayer or a blessing for how we have gotten to this place. Also bring to God any fears or worries or concerns you might have for our journey into our future together.
4. Take a few moments to reflect on the places where you see those Advent themes unfolding before us and where other places might be where they can be brought by us. After reflection, write a prayer or offer your own pledge to carry on the calling to re-present Christ in our world in new and different ways.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Holy God, we turn to you in each season of our lives.

For the seasons in our past that brought us joy, the seasons we deeply miss with longing in our hearts, God, we offer our gratitude. May our memories be sources of comfort rather than pain.

For the seasons in our past that are tender and painful, we ask your healing, O God. Liberate our hearts, minds, and spirits from trauma, and let us bury what must be buried.

For new beginnings that fill us with excitement, we give you praise. May we step into these new seasons with grace.

For changing seasons that bring anxiety for what the future may hold, we ask for your peace. Fill us with hope, and help us navigate the way forward.

God, we come before you now with full hearts, offering you every part of ourselves: our grief, our pain, our joy, our anxiety, our gratitude. God, we bring it all.

As we bring these prayers forward to the Communion Table, we ask that you receive them, hold them, and respond to them in your wisdom.

Gratefully we pray, Amen.

We will hold all of these prayers deep in our hearts trusting that God knows the depths of our hearts.

Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayers. Amen.

TAIZE RESPONSE "In God Alone" (3 times)

*In God alone my soul can find rest and peace,
In God my peace and joy.
Only in God my soul can find its rest,
Find its rest and peace.*

SCRIPTURE READING Isaiah 43:16-21

Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.

WORDS OF COMFORT/AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

The first words of Genesis tell us that in the beginning, God was creating.

We believe in a God who is at work in all our beginnings.

In Revelation, we hear Jesus proclaim, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."

***We believe in a Savior who is with us through it all,
in every beginning, and in every ending that comes before.***

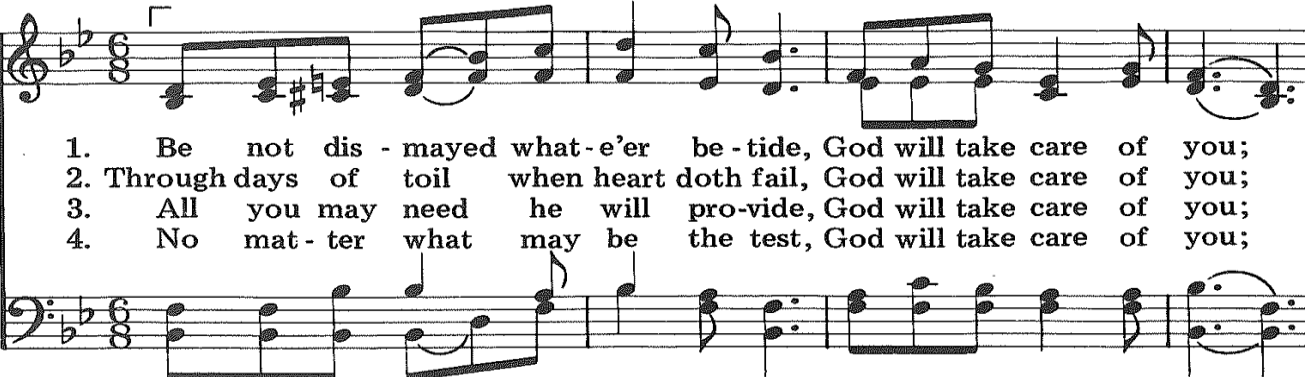
And so from beginning to end, from Genesis to Revelation, from the first day to the last, we are held by our God who knows our name.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

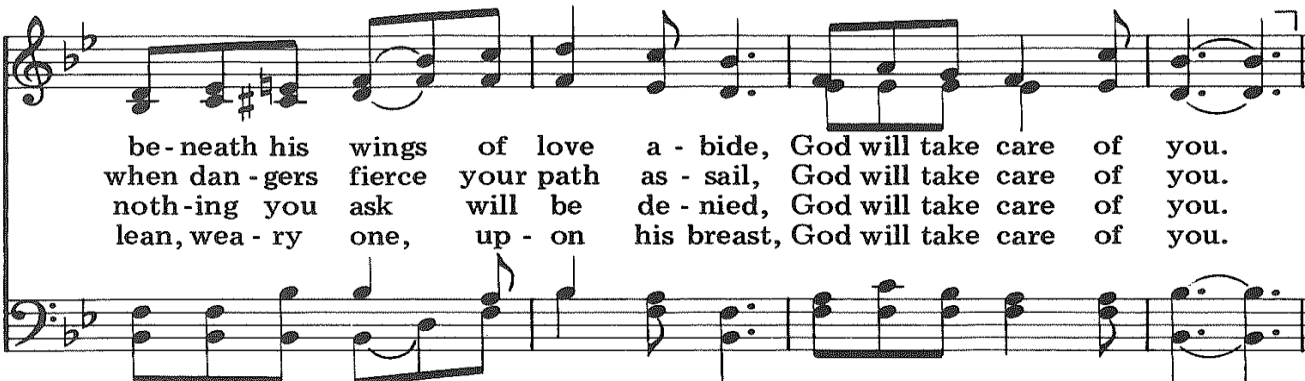
HYMN 619 "God Will Take Care of You"

619 God Will Take Care of You

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. 1 Pet. 5:7

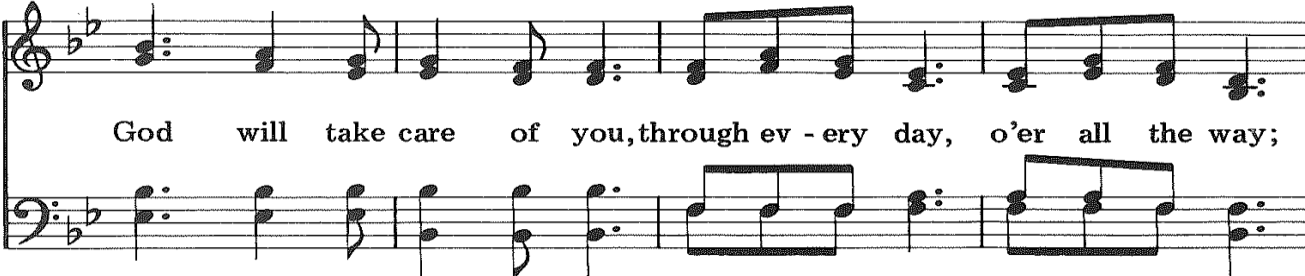


1. Be not dis - mayed what - e'er be - tide, God will take care of you;
2. Through days of toil when heart doth fail, God will take care of you;
3. All you may need he will pro - vide, God will take care of you;
4. No mat - ter what may be the test, God will take care of you;



be - neath his wings of love a - bide, God will take care of you.
when dan - gers fierce your path as - sail, God will take care of you.
noth - ing you ask will be de - nied, God will take care of you.
lean, wea - ry one, up - on his breast, God will take care of you.

Refrain



God will take care of you, through ev - ery day, o'er all the way;



he will take care of you, God will take care of you.

WORDS: Civilla D. Martin, 1904
MUSIC: W. Stillman Martin, 1904

GOD CARES
C.M.Ref.

BENEDICTION

*THE IRISH BLESSING

*May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind be ever at your back,
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
And the rains fall soft upon your fields.
And until we meet again, and until we meet again,
May the God who loves us all
Hold you in the palm of His hand.
Amen.*

POSTLUDE “Hymn of Promise”

This afternoon, we are pleased to have Rev. Daniel Carlson with us throughout and following the Longest Night service as a pastoral counselor. Pastor Daniel will be available for any who may want the opportunity to speak with someone about grief, sorrow, loss, or anxious feelings experienced.

Please remember to come to our **Christmas Eve worship service!** While the service will begin at 7:00pm, the prelude, which includes several special music selections, will begin at 6:30pm. Please come to support the individuals and choir members as they welcome us into the service.

On **December 29**, our worship service will be a celebration of the joy of Christ’s birth through the sharing of the lessons and carols that tell the story.

The Liturgy for the worship service was written by Rev. Anna Strickland. “A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org” and is used with permission.

WORSHIP TEAM

Worship Leader
Rev. Robert Hoffman

Sound Technician
Mike York

Liturgist
Melody York

Video Technician
Alex Huiest

Music
Ben April

Welcome Host
Lori Coté

Coffee Hour Host
Linda Murphy

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Of the Father's Love Begotten

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The Irish Blessing

Words: Traditional
Music: Benjamin April
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I Belong to You, O God

Words & Music: Bruce Cornwell, harmonized
by Benjamin April
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Hymn of Promise

Music: Natalie Sleeth, arr. John Carter
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In God Alone

Words & Music: Jacques Berthier
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ZOOM

To join Sunday Worship via Zoom, use the link below:

<https://tinyurl.com/CRCCZoom>

Meeting ID: 688 088 7155

By Phone: 1-646-558-8656

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