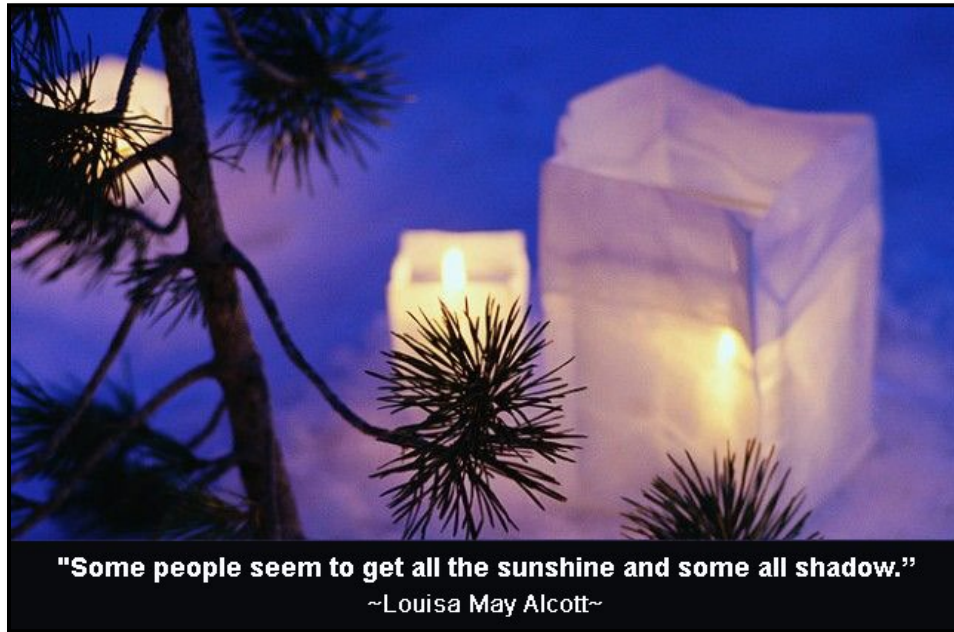


ZION REFORMED UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE
DECEMBER 21ST, 2020 6:30 7 P.M.
WINTER SOLSTICE



Hope ❄️ Peace ❄️ Joy ❄️ Love ❄️ Christ

Christmas can be a painful time for many in our congregation and community. It may be the first Christmas without a loved family member who has recently died; facing life after divorce or separation; coping with the loss of a job; living with cancer or some other disease that places a question mark over the future; or any number of other circumstances of loss that make parties and joviality painful. It may just be a time that has always been difficult for whatever reason.

The constant refrain on the radio and television, in shopping malls and churches, about the happiness of the season, about getting together with family and friends, reminds many people of what they have lost or have never had. The anguish of broken relationships, the insecurity of unemployment, the weariness of ill health, the pain of isolation - all these can make us feel very alone in the midst of the celebrating and spending. Our spirits sink, as the days grow shorter. We feel the darkness growing deeper around us.

We need encouragement to live the days ahead of us. We need the space and time to acknowledge our sadness and concern; we need to know that we are not alone. It is perfectly okay to grieve and release your sorrows. Today, we welcome the hope of the Christ child without the merriment of the season, simply basking in the moment embraced by God and one another on this longest night. We hope and yearn together for the return of the light with hope, peace, joy, and love as found in Christ.

WE GATHER TO PRAISE GOD

Gathering Music✦

"Clair de Lune"

Call to The Light

One: It takes faith beyond imagining, to hear this story, if you are living things too difficult to be made sense of by an ancient memory of angels and Magi.

~the candle is lit~

All: Thank you, O God, for the gift of hope in our emptiness.

One: It takes faith beyond imagining, to come to this place, when you know that it will be a greater miracle than any virgin birth for love to be born right now in our world.

~the candle is lit~

All: Thank you for the gift of peace in our times of uncertainty.

One: The alleluias we sing will not be to drown out the world's truths that would deny them; but to pray they will hold us in their faith.

~the candle is lit~

All: Thank you for the gift of joy in our times of sadness.

One: We gather here - the bewildered, the broken hearted, the fragile and the hopeful the faithful and the faithless because all we have left when we stand in the world's darkness is this longing for love to be born once again.

~the candle is lit~

All: Thank you for the gift of love in our time of loneliness.

One: In the beginning was the Word and Word was with God and the Word was God.

~the candle is lit~

One: The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Words of Welcome

Prelude to Service✦

"Gabriel's Oboe"

Prayers for Those Who Mourn

Interlude of Rest✦

"Silent Night, Holy Night"

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

First Lesson

Matthew 11:28-30 (NRSV)

Lector: Rae Smith

²⁸ "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Second Lesson

John 14:1-4, 16-20, 25-27 (NRSV)

Lector: Rae Smith

¹ "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ² In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to the place where I am going." ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. ¹⁷ This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. ¹⁸ "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹ In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²⁵ "I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

Words of Reflection

"The Light Comes"

Interlude of Hope

"O God, Our Help in Ages Past"

ACTS OF REMEMBRANCE AND COMMUNION

We gather on this longest night with signs all around. The Advent wreath has been lit, with the lights of hope, peace, joy, and love already lit as we prepare the way of the coming of Jesus. If, as the Bible says, God is love, and God is eternal, then love is eternal as well. Tonight, we are reminded that nothing can extinguish the candle of love. The love that God has for us is steadfast and endures forever. The love that we have for those we mourn cannot be extinguished by death.

In front of us are the bread and the cup. These remind of Jesus' Last Supper. It was a supper he shared with his disciples when he knew that his life on earth was coming to an end. The bread, when broken, reminds us of our human frailty, and of our unity as the Body of Christ. The cup,

reminds us of the Christ's death on a cross, and of God's covenantal promises that forgiveness that is offered to all.

On this, the longest night of the year, we are reminded of just how dark the world can be. Yet it was into this dark world that Christ was born. It was in the midst of death and destruction that a child came so that we may have life. We gather at Christ's table in remembrance of the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We remember that Jesus walked with us as the Word of God made flesh. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, forgave the afflicted, comforted the mourning, worked for justice, and wept for his friends. He proclaimed that the Kingdom of God is at hand, and calls all people to enter with rejoicing. He came so that we may have life, and have it abundantly, and he invites us all into life eternal. By the baptism of his love, compassion, suffering, death, and resurrection Christ gave birth to his Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

When Jesus gathered with his disciples, he took the bread, gave thanks to God, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples and said, "Take eat, this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over Jesus took the cup, gave thanks to God, gave it to his disciples and said, "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

And so, in remembrance of these mighty acts of Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and grape. Make them be for us the body and blood of Jesus Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by Christ's blood. By your spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, one with the great communion of saints, one with the great cloud of witnesses, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we all feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in your Holy Church, all honor and glory is yours now and forever, and so with the confidence of children we pray:

All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your 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 Yours is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Come now, to the table of Christ, for all things are ready. After you finish the bread and cup that

you have prepared, I invite you to light your candle and keep it lit throughout the remainder of our service.

Sharing the Meal

“Precious Lord, Take My Hand”

SENDING FORTH

Blessing and Sending Forth



*MAY YOU FIND HOPE, PEACE, JOY, AND
LOVE ON THIS LONGEST NIGHT!
(and throughout the year)*

Recommended Music Listening:

Somewhere in Your Silent Night by Casting Crowns

<https://youtu.be/nT-5cP4BeoI>

The Sweetest Gift By The Piano Guys featuring Craig Alven

<https://youtu.be/0yFXfAGl17M>

(A song dedicated to those missing someone at Christmas time)

Grief During the Holidays

"The holidays are times spent with our loved ones." This has been imprinted on our psyche from a young age. Holidays mark the passage of time in our lives. They are part of the milestones we share with each other and they generally represent time spent with family. But since holidays are for being with those we love the most, how on earth can anyone be expected to cope with them when a loved one has died? For many people, this is the hardest part of grieving, when we miss our loved ones even more than usual. How can we celebrate togetherness when there is none?

When you lose someone special, your world lacks its celebratory qualities. Holidays magnify that loss. The sadness deepens and the loneliness can feel isolating. The need for support may be the greatest during the holidays. Pretending you don't hurt and/or it isn't a harder time of the year is just not the truth for you. But you can – and will – get through the holidays. Rather than avoiding the feelings of grief, lean into them. It is not the grief you want to avoid, it is the pain. No one can take that pain away, but grief is not just pain, grief is love. Here is a video that may help you with www.HolidayGrief.com

There are a number of ways to incorporate your loved one and your loss into the holidays.

Thanksgiving, Christmas, Chanukah, New Years

These are the biggest and usually most challenging of all. You can and will get through the Holidays. Rather than avoiding the feelings of grief, lean into them. It is not the grief you want to avoid, it is the pain. Grief is the way out of the pain. Grief is our internal feelings and mourning is our external expressions.

Ways to externalize the loss – give it a time and a place

- A prayer before the Holiday dinner, about your loved one.
- Light a candle for your loved one.
- Create an online tribute for them.
- Share a favorite story about your loved one.
- Have everyone tell a funny story about your loved one.
- At your place of worship remember them in a prayer.
- Chat online about them.

Do's and Don'ts

- Do be gentle with yourself and protect yourself.
- Don't do more than you want, and don't do anything that does not serve your soul and your loss.
- Do allow time for the feelings.
- Don't keep feelings bottled up. If you have 500 tears to cry don't stop at 250.
- Do allow others to help. We all need help at certain times in our lives.
- Don't ask if you can help or should help a friend in grief. Just help. Find ways; invite them to group events or just out for coffee.
- Do, in grief, pay extra attention to the children. Children are too often the forgotten grievers.
- Have a Plan A/Plan B; Cancel the holiday altogether; Try the holidays in a new way: Remember, there is no right or wrong way to handle the holidays in grief.
- You have to decide what is right for you and do it. You have every right to change your mind, even a few times. Friends and family members may not have a clue how to help you through this time of year, and you may not either.
- Read More at <https://grief.com/grief-the-holidays>

Grieving Together and Apart

A devotion by Rev John Edgerton, Lead Pastor at First United Church of Oak Park, Illinois
www.ucc.org/daily_devotional_grieving_together_and_apart

Abraham rose from beside his dead wife and spoke to the Hittites. "I am a foreigner and stranger among you. Sell me some property for a burial site here so I can bury my dead." The Hittites replied to Abraham, "None of us will refuse you his tomb for burying your dead." Again Abraham said, "I will pay the price of the field." - Genesis 23:3-13 (NIV, excerpted)

Our nation and our churches are awash in grief. Grief for lost loved ones. Grief for lost traditions. Grief for lost futures. Grief for lost time. Grief that goes on and on.

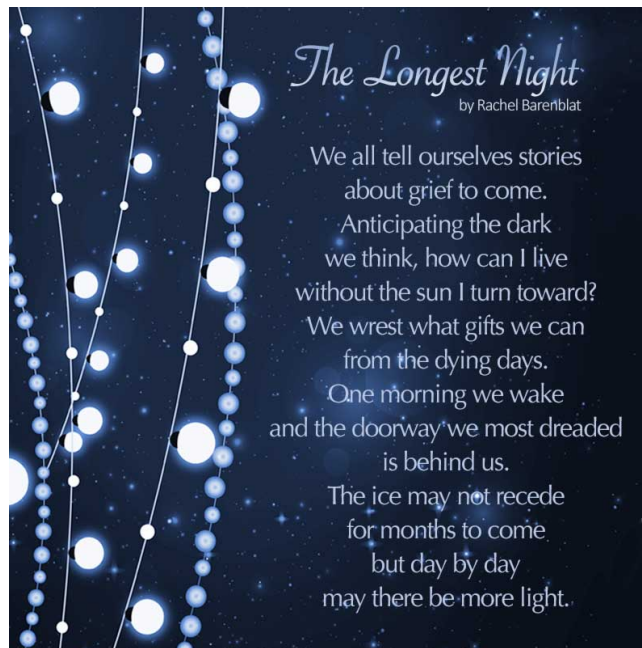
Grief can seem a backwards thing. It makes Abraham insist on paying handsomely for what would have been freely given. When the Hittites offer to share in some of Abraham's grief, his response is, "No, this is mine."

Abraham was right to insist on grieving his own way. And the Hittites were right to allow him to do so. They offered what help they could imagine, then they had the grace to take "no" for an answer.

If you are in the grips of grief today, remember the example of Abraham. You can grieve your own way, even if it doesn't make sense to others, even if it is costly.

And as you encounter other people, know that they are all in grief. Our whole nation is swimming in grief. And remember the example of the Hittites: offer what help you can imagine, then have the grace to take "no" for an answer.

Prayer: God of grace, comfort those in grief.



Find UCC Resources on Hope, Grief and Loss:

www.ucc.org/recovering_hope_grief_and_loss_resources_covid

Grief Resources by Hospice of Washington County

Support Groups:

- On-going Open, Drop-in Adult Grief Support Group for those who have experienced the death of a loved one. First and third Monday's monthly from 10:30am.-12:00 noon and second and fourth Thursday's monthly from 5:30-7:00p.m.
- Closed-Ended Grief Groups offered periodically throughout the year:
 - Overdose Loss Support Group, *offered in the fall*
 - Survivors of Suicide Group, *offered in the spring*
 - Teen Grief Group, *offered in the summer*
- For More Info on Support Groups: <https://hospiceofwc.org/grief-support/bereavement-services>
- Psychology Today Grief Support Listings:
www.psychologytoday.com/us/groups/grief/md/washington-county

Educational Workshops *(offered throughout the year)*

- Grief 101
- Children and Grief
- Coping with the Holidays
- DoveTales is designed for children (ages 6 – 13) who are coping with the death of a loved one. DoveTales is an educational and nurturing experience for children to share their "Tales" and meet others who "get it."
- For More Info on Workshops: <https://hospiceofwc.org/grief-support/bereavement-services>
- Suggested Readings: <https://hospiceofwc.org/grief-support/suggested-reading>

For Information on Understanding Grief and when to seek professional help coping:
<https://hospiceofwc.org/grief-education>

Washington County Resources:

Grief can sometimes lead to severe depression, anxiety, or a mental health crisis, including suicidal thoughts. Please do not hesitate to contact Hospice of Washington County at **301-791-6360**, they are available 24/7. The numbers below may also be reached 24 hours/day and have TDD capability for the deaf. If you or someone you love is having a mental health emergency, you may also call 911 or go to the closest emergency department at your local hospital.

Hospice of Washington County	301-791-6360
Washington County Hotline	1-800-422-0009
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline	1-800-273-TALK (8255)
Sheriff's Office	301-790-3700
Maryland State Police	301-739-2102
Meritus Medical Center	301-790-8000

This contact list can be found at <https://hospiceofwc.org/grief-support/emergencies>



IMPORTANT DATES

Week of December 20th



Soup Kitchen

December 22nd, 5pm-6:15pm

Social distancing and masks enforced; all are welcome.

Christmas Eve Virtual Service

December 24th, 7pm at www.zionreformed.church/sermons

Sunday Worship

December 27th, 11am at www.zionreformed.church/sermons

New Year's Eve Virtual Service

December 31st, 7pm at www.zionreformed.church/sermons

Downtown 4-H Club

No meeting this week due to the holidays.

Prayer Requests



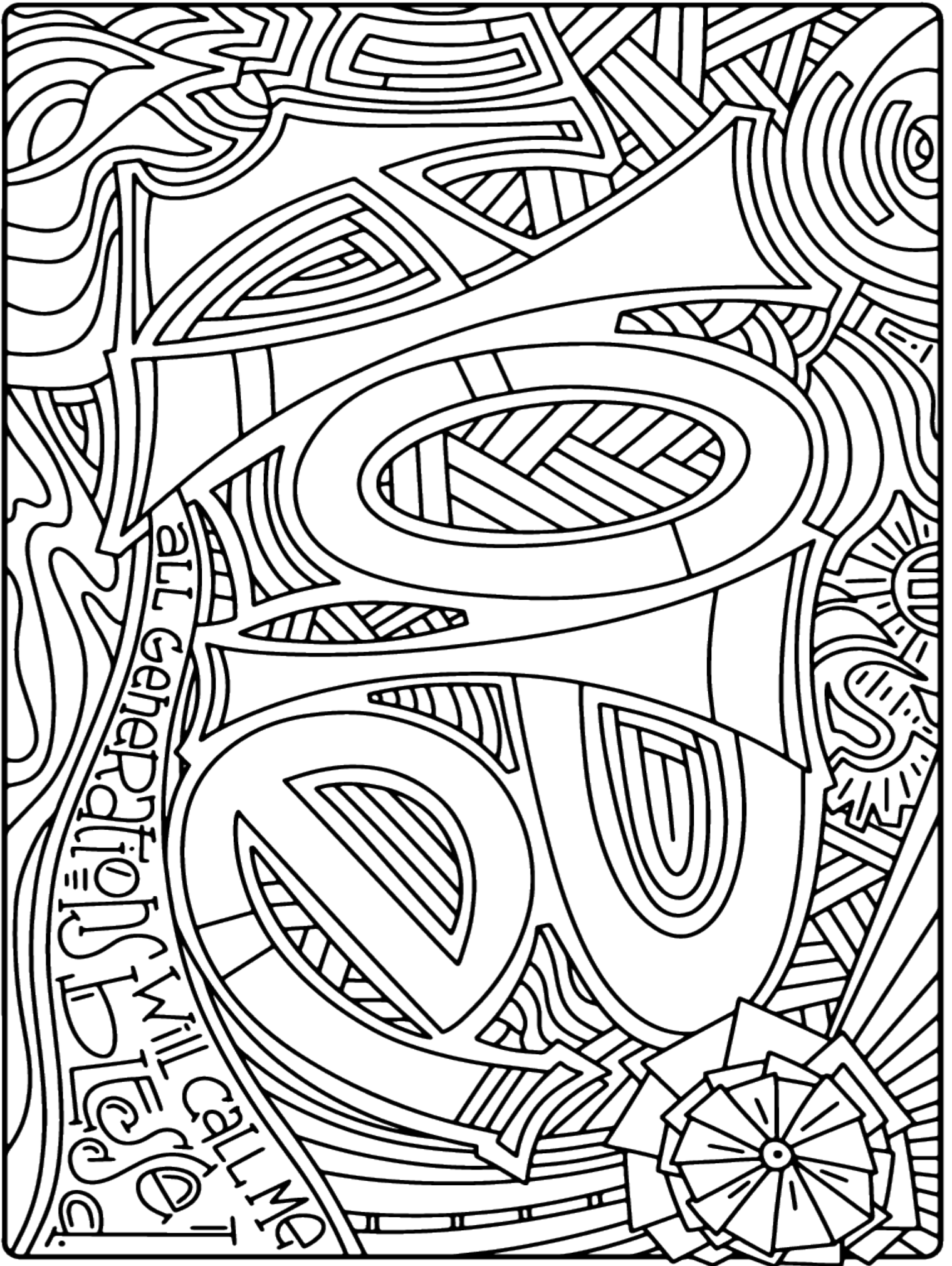
Submit your prayer requests to the church office by phone at 301.739.7244 or email at zionrucc@myactv.net so we can pray for one another. The prayer list of names can be emailed or mailed to you upon request due to privacy concerns.

Other Local Resources:

Call, text, or chat with your local 211 to speak with a community resource specialist who will help you find services and resources that are available to you. Resources for food programs, shelter and housing, utilities, emergencies and disasters, employment and education, veteran services, health care and health epidemic info, addiction prevention and rehabilitation programs, reentry for ex-offenders, support groups, mental health needs, and to find a safe, confidential path out of physical and/or emotional domestic abuse.



Dial 2-1-1 or toll free at 866.411.6803, or alternate number 301.662.2255
or text your zip code to: 898-211



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Gathering Music: "Clair de Lune" from "Suite Bergamasque" (L. 75) – Composed by Claude Debussy (1905), ©Public Domain. Performed by Claire Marie Moblard (Organist) of Zion Reformed UCC. All rights reserved.
*Source: [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clair_de Lune). (*Clair de lune is moonlight in French, and suit bergamasque means piano suite*)

Prelude to Service: "Gabriel's Oboe" from the motion picture "The Mission" – Words and music by Ennio Morricone (1985), ©1986 by EMI Virgin Music LTD, a division of EMI Virgin Music, INC. Performed by Claire Marie Moblard (Organist) and Byron L. Stay (Trumpeter) of Zion Reformed UCC. All rights reserved.
*Source: [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gabriel's_Oboe).

Interlude of Rest: "Silent Night, Holy Night" – Tune, "Stille Nacht" by Franz Xaver Gruber (1818), ©Public Domain. Arrangement by Larry Minsky, ©1998 by Neil A. Kjos Music Company. Lyrics by Joseph Mohr, translated by J. Freeman Young (stanza 1 & 3), and anonymous translator (stanzas 2 & 4), ©Public Domain. Performed by Claire Marie Moblard (Organist) and Byron L. Stay (Trumpeter) of Zion Reformed UCC. All rights reserved. *Source(s): [Hymnary \(tune/lyrics\)](https://www.hymnary.org/tune/lyrics/Silent_Night_Holy_Night) and [SheetMusicPlus](https://www.sheetmusicplus.com/).

Interlude of Hope: "O God, Our Help in Ages Past" – Tune, "Saint Anne" by William Croft (1708), ©Public Domain. Lyrics by Isaac Watts (1719), ©Public Domain. Performed by Claire Marie Moblard (Organist) and Byron L. Stay (Trumpeter) of Zion Reformed UCC. All rights reserved. *Source: [Hymnary](https://www.hymnary.org/).

Communion Interlude: "Precious Lord, Take My Hand" – Tune, "Precious Lord," is an arrangement by Thomas Andrew Dorsey (1938), ©1938 by Hill and Range Songs, Inc. (renewed, assigned to Unichappell Music, Inc. Arrangement based on the tune, "Maitland" by George N. Allen (1708), ©Public Domain. Lyrics by Thomas Andrew Dorsey (1938), ©1938 by Unichappell Music, Inc. (renewed), assigned to Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp. Performed by Claire Marie Moblard (Organist) and Byron L. Stay (Trumpeter) of Zion Reformed UCC. All rights reserved. *Source: [Hymnary](https://www.hymnary.org/).

Liturgical Components: Longest Night Service written by Rob McCoy, ©2012 by Rob McCoy. (Adapted by Katie Penick) Used by permission. Rae Smith reading the people's responses.

Scripture Readings: from the [New Revised Standard Version](https://www.bible.com/en/bible/1/1) of the Bible, ©1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. All rights reserved, used with permission. Barb Hendershot as lector.

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Zion Reformed United Church of Christ

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