



**SERVICE OF THE LONGEST NIGHT
DECEMBER 21, 7PM**

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP (based on Isaiah 9)

One: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
on those who lived in a land of deep shadow a light has shone.

**All: For the yoke that was weighing upon them, and the burden upon their shoulders,
you have broken in pieces, O God.**

One: All around us, lights are shimmering and the sound of laughter and delight fills the air.
But inside, all is not merry and bright.

**All: We feel tired; we feel sad;
we feel overwhelmed.**

One: We walk in darkness, in a land of deep shadow
All: And wonder if there is a place for us this Christmas season.

One: We walk in good company,
with the people of God in every generation
who have waited for the light.

**All: We gather tonight to wait for the Light,
the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace.**

One: O come, o come, Emmanuel, God-with-us.
All: Come and shed your light into the deep shadows.

SONG OF WELCOME Night of Silence

INVOCATION

Almighty God,

we thank you for your constant love and for the blessings of this day.
We know that even when we cannot see or feel you, still you are there.

Help us to remember you and to listen for your voice
in the words of family, friends, and strangers.

Kindle our hearts and awaken hope,
that we may know you as you reveal yourself in the world and in our lives.

Let the light of your holy Spirit shine like these candles in the darkness,
lighting the way for all who feel despairing, lost, or forgotten,
and grant that it may come to dwell so deeply in our hearts
that when we leave this place it may shine on,
for us and for those we meet along the way.

Amen.

LISTENING TO THE WORD

SUNG RESPONSE IT CAME UPON THE MIDNIGHT CLEAR (ST. 1)

It came upon the midnight clear, That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth, To touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, goodwill to men, From heaven's all-gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay, To hear the angels sing.

SCRIPTURE PSALM 22: 1-2, 14

POEM "In the Darkness with Jesus" Chris Polhill

In the dark with Jesus,
held in tenderness,
silent, simply waiting,
deepest rest.

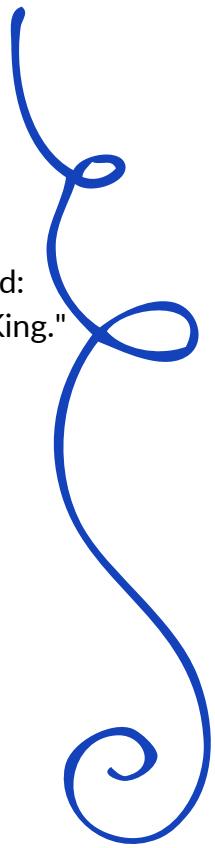
In the dark with Jesus,
quiet, hidden growing,
inner rubbish sorting,
frenzy stilled.

God's glory wrapped in shadows;
brightness hid for love's sake.
Contentedly beside us
when life's light is blinding.
For in the dark with Jesus, healing comes.

SUNG RESPONSE IT CAME UPON THE MIDNIGHT CLEAR (ST. 2)

Still through the cloven skies they come, With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heavenly music floats O'er all the weary world;
Above its sad and lowly plains, They bend on hovering wing,
And ever o'er its Babel sounds The blessed angels sing.

SCRIPTURE JEREMIAH 8:18-9:1



POEM
“Into This Silent Night”
Ann Weems

Into this silent night
As we make our weary way
We know not where,
Just when the night becomes its darkest
And we cannot see our path,
Just then
Is when the angels rush in,
Their hands full of stars.

SUNG RESPONSE
IT CAME UPON THE MIDNIGHT CLEAR (ST. 3)

And ye, beneath life's crushing load, Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way With painful steps and slow,
Look now! for glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road, And hear the angels sing!

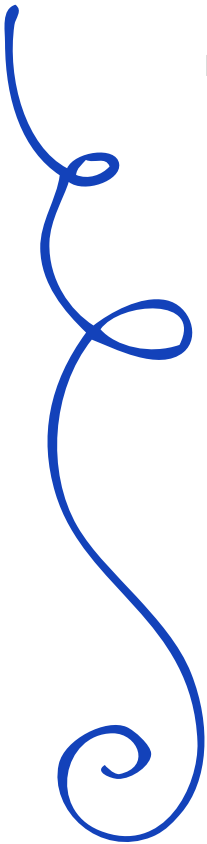
SCRIPTURE
MATTHEW 11:28-30

POEM
“Toward the Light”
Ann Weems

Too often our answer to the darkness
is not running toward the Bethlehem
but running away.
We ought to know by now that we can't see
where we're going in the dark.
Running away is rampant...
separation is stylish:
separation from mates, from friends, from self.
Run and tranquilize, don't talk about it, avoid.
Run away and join the army
of those who have already run away.
When are we going to learn that Christmas Peace
comes only when we turn and face the darkness?
Only then will we be able to see “the light of the world”.

SUNG RESPONSE
IT CAME UPON THE MIDNIGHT CLEAR (ST. 4)
For lo!, the days are hastening on, By prophet seen of old,
When with the ever-circling years Comes round the age of gold
When peace shall over all the earth Its ancient splendors fling,⁹
And the whole world give back the song Which now the angels sing.

SCRIPTURE
LUKE 1: 28-33



POEM
“The Christmas Spirit”
Ann Weems

The Christmas spirit is that hope
which tenaciously clings to the hearts of the faithful
and announces
in the face of any Herod the world can produce
and all the inn doors slammed in our faces
and all the dark nights of our souls
that with God all things still are possible,
that even now
unto us a Child is born!

SONG
Welcome to the World

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES

One: We light this candle to remember those who have died,
those whose names we speak in our hearts.

We remember them, their names, their faces, their voices.
We give thanks to you, O God, for our memories of them.

All: May God's eternal love surround them.

One: We light this second candle to acknowledge the pain of loss:
the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health.
As we gather up the pain of the past, we offer it to you, O God,
asking that into our hearts you will place the gift of peace.

All: Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into your future.

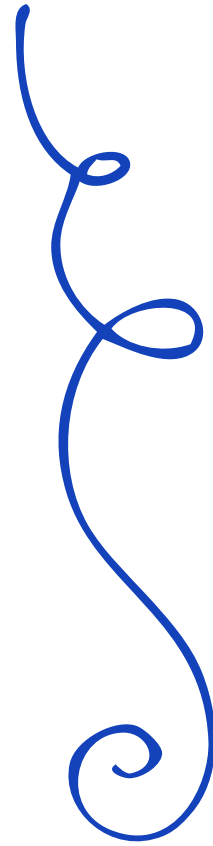
One: We light this third candle to remember ourselves
before God this Christmas time.

We pause and remember the past weeks, months
and for some of us, years of difficult times.

We hold before you our memories, the grief,
the sadness and hurts.

And we hold before you
those whom we know who need your love.

**All: We remember that the light of the world was born at Christmas,
and has not been overcome by the darkness.**



TIME OF HEALING PRAYER

During this time you may visit the prayer stations or pray quietly in your seat.

Anointing

Come forward to a pastor for anointing with oil and for personal prayer. You may ask for prayer for yourself or another person and can be as specific or private as you need. Please indicate whether you'd like anointing on your hand or forehead.

Candles

Pray for hope, peace, joy or love for yourself or a loved one by lighting a candle on the communion table.

Manger

The manger held a vulnerable infant, God incarnate; it can hold any prayer you have. Write your prayers on the slips of paper and place them in the manger.

Bowl

By the silhouetted nativity is a bowl full of salty water, representing God's tears. Add salt to the bowl to signify your own sadness and suffering. Dip your finger in the water and make the sign of the cross on your forehead or hand, signifying that through the waters of baptism, God can transform anything into new life.

SONG OF HEALING There's Still My Joy

LITANY OF AFFIRMATION

One: God did not wait 'til the world was ready, 'til nations were at peace.

**All: God came when the heavens were unsteady
and prisoners cried out for release.**

One: God did not wait for the perfect time.

**All: God came when the need was deep and great.
God dined with sinners in all their grime.**

One: God did not wait 'til hearts were pure.

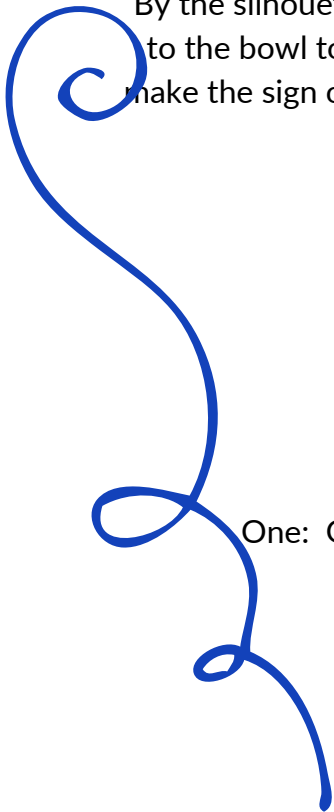
**All: In joy, God came to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.
To a world like ours, of anguished shame, God came
and God's light would not go out.**

One: God came to a world which did not mesh; to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.

All: In the mystery of Word made flesh, the maker of the stars was born.

One: We cannot wait 'til the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
or to share our grief, to touch our pain.

All: God came with love: Rejoice! Rejoice!



*CLOSING SONG

Be Still, My Soul

FINLANDIA

1. Be still, my soul: the Lord is on your side.
2. **Be still, my soul: your God will un - der - take**
3. Be still, my soul: the hour is has - tening on

5
Bear pa - tient - ly the cross of grief or pain;
to guide the fu - ture, as in a - ges past.
9 when we shall be for - ev - er with the Lord,
leave to your God to or - der and pro - vide;
Your hope, your con - fi - dence let noth - ing shake;
13 when dis - ap - point - ment, grief, and fear are gone,
in ev - ery change God faith - ful will re - main.
all now mys - te - rious shall be bright at last.
17 sor - row for - got, love's pur - est joys re - stored.
Be still, my soul: your best, your heaven - ly friend
Be still, my soul: the waves and winds still know
21 Be still, my soul: when change and tears are past,
through thorn - y ways leads to a joy - ful end.
the Christ who ruled them while he dwelt be - low.
all safe and bless - ed we shall meet at last.

*Benediction



CHILDREN AND FAMILIES:

We LOVE kids at Westfield. Children are welcome to stay through the whole service. If your child is more active, relax! We believe God put the wiggles and giggles in children. Don't feel you have to suppress it in God's house. All are welcome!

Sit toward the front where it is easier for your little ones to see and hear what's going on at the altar. They tire of seeing the backs of others' heads.

Quietly explain the parts of worship. Sing the hymns, pray, and voice the responses. Children learn liturgical behavior by copying you.

If you have to leave the service with your child, feel free to do so, but please come back. As Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me."

Remember that the way we welcome children in church directly affects the way they respond to the Church, to God, and to one another. Let them know that they are at home in this house of worship.

THE REV. DR. JONATHAN CHAPMAN



The Rev. Dr. Jonathan Chapman graduated from Candler School of Theology, Emory University, in May 2019 with his Doctor of Ministry in Biblical Witness and Proclamation. His capstone work, *The Year of Mark*, received the People's Choice Award among his cohort. While at Candler for his Master of Divinity (May, 2010), he was active with the Office of Worship, and was awarded the Hoyt Hickman Award for Outstanding Liturgical Scholarship. Jonathan is a 2007 Congregational Fellow and 2006 Undergraduate Fellow with The Fund for Theological Education. He graduated from Elon University in 2007 with a degree in Religious Studies. At Elon, he was selected as a Leadership Fellow and was awarded the W. L. Monroe Christian Education and Personality Award in the 2007. While at Elon he joined Elon Community Church, United Church of Christ, the congregation in which he was ordained.

Jonathan joined Westfield in October of 2012 and was officially installed as Pastor and Teacher in May of 2013, presiding over its revitalization. In October of 2022, he celebrated a decade with Westfield.

He was selected to be a part of the Next Generation Leadership Initiative, a program sponsored by the Pension Boards of the United Church of Christ that works with young clergy committed to parish ministry through a decade-long relationship. Dr. Chapman consults with congregations on a variety of topics ranging from revitalization to worship to marketing their churches. He married his husband, Greg (pastor of Enfield Congregational Church, United Church of Christ in Enfield, CT), in December of 2014 at Westfield. Jonathan is an award-winning stained glass artist.

Rev. Jonathan's Onsite Hours are Monday-Thursday, 9am-12pm. His additional work day is Sunday, when he is available by appointment. His days off are Friday and Saturday.

Find time with Rev. Jon by scanning the QR code or going to calendly.com/revjonchapman

Contact info for Rev. Jonathan:
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Ministers
Pastor
Director of Welcome
Director of Music
Director of Children
Church Administrator
Facilities Caretaker

All of the Congregation
The Rev. Dr. Jonathan Chapman
Kevin Williams
Sue Theroux
Donna Bartholomew
Jessica Payette
Michelle Plasse