

## *Passing of the Peace*

Now, as a people who know God's grace and nearness, let us turn to our neighbors. The peace of Christ be with you.

**And also with you.**

## *Thanksgiving Over the Oil*

Let us pray. O God, the giver of health and salvation, we give thanks to you for the gift of oil.

As your holy apostles anointed many who were sick and healed them, so pour out your Holy Spirit on us and on this gift, that those who in faith and repentance receive this anointing may be made whole; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## *Anointing with Oil*

*Anointing with oil invokes the healing love of God.  
You are invited to come forward for a moment of anointing and a time of prayer with clergy.*

## *Prayers for Healing and Wholeness*

## *Prayer After the Anointing*

**Almighty God, we pray that we may be comforted in our suffering and made whole. When we are afraid, give us courage; when we feel weak, grant us your strength; when we are afflicted, afford us patience; when we are lost, offer us hope; when we are alone, move us to be present with one another. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.**

## *Closing Song—UMH 211*

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”  
vs.1

VENI EMMANUEL

## *Dismissal and Blessing*



Seasonal art by:  
Alli Dillard

St. John's welcomes everyone. Our hearts, minds, and doors are open to people of all ages, races, nationalities, sexual orientations, gender identities, theological identities, economic status, disabilities, and people who sojourn on the way to recovery and wholeness. We are a diverse community whose discipleship to Jesus Christ is demonstrated through our deep commitment to servant ministry.

Welcome Home!

+ Please stand as you are able.

# St. John's United Methodist Church

December 21, 2016

6:30 p.m.

“THE LONGEST NIGHT”

## *Greeting*

## *Opening Hymn—UMH 221*

CRANHAM

“In the Bleak Midwinter”

## *Gather the Light*

We light our first candle  
a single light that the deepest darkness cannot conquer –  
small – insignificant, but a sign of hope.

**Let it speak to us of the tiny flame of hope buried within us –  
the stubborn little light that refuses to be extinguished  
by all that life has thrown at it.**

We light our second candle  
a companion to the first – equally small – equally insignificant,  
but witnessing to hope that another light brings.

**Let it speak to us of the lights of companionship –  
of our families and our friends – of strangers  
and kindnesses found in unexpected places that restored  
our hope in human nature.**

We light our third candle  
recalling nights of watching and waiting – sleepless – anxious  
when dawn seemed to ebb further from the horizon and hope  
seemed forlorn.

**Let it speak to us of the sureness of morning –  
of the passing of darkness of suffering – and the promise of  
an eternal sunrise dawning for those we have loved and lost  
and dawning too for us – though we may yet be in that  
darkest hour before the dawn.**

We light our fourth candle –  
marking the closing of the Advent season and the immediacy of  
Christmas – a time of peace and joy we may not ourselves feel able to  
welcome – as our spirits dwell in dark and wintriness.

**Let it speak to us of hope –  
of being together in this place of healing and wholeness –  
of our companionship this night at the turning of the year –  
of faith that we and those we have loved and lost  
are held eternally in the hand of the One who brought light into  
being – and who knows each one of us by name.**

**Let the star of your home touch the minds of all people  
with the bright beams of mercy and truth;  
and so direct our steps that we may ever walk in the way  
revealed to us, as the shepherds of Bethlehem walked  
with joy to the manger where he dwelled,  
who now and ever reigns in our hearts, Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

*Musical Response—UMH 206*

HOUSTON

“I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light”

*Scripture—Matthew 11.28-29 (MSG)*

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away  
with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest.  
Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced  
rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep  
company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

*Homily*

Rev Dr. Johnny Jeffords

*Musical Response*

“Silent Night”  
John Kilzer, Soloist

## *Call to Confession and Lament*

In confessing our sin and speaking a corporate lament,  
we declare that we gather together with evidence of sin’s  
brokenness and with marks left by suffering and trauma.  
We are all here –

**wounded and wounding,  
lamenting and repenting,  
ruptured and re-membered.**

We are all here. In that spirit, let us join together in the  
Prayer of Confession and Lament.

## *Prayer of Confession*

Text: McKenna Lewellen

Lord, we have sinned.  
**We have fallen short, failed to love You and others,  
and denied the full weight of our sin.**  
We come before you weighed down and in need of grace.  
**Forgive our blindness to injustice, our silence in the face of pain,  
our rebellion against your immeasurable love.**

(Silence)

## *A Lament*

Lord, we are wounded.  
**We have been wounded by others,  
by broken systems, and sometimes by our own selves.**  
We come before you confused, aching, and battered to raise a lament.  
**My God, my God, where have you gone?  
I am poured out like water, dismembered, melting from grief.**

(Silence)

## *Assurance and Pardon*

Hear the good news of the gospel: In Jesus Christ, we know that our  
sins are forgiven, and in Jesus Christ, we know Divinity is  
present with us in pain.  
**Alleluia! Amen.**