



# Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church

## BLUE CHRISTMAS PRAYER SERVICE

DECEMBER 13, 2023 • 6:30 PM

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Eugenia Gorbacheva, *Aurora Borealis*, 2021

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**This Is God's House. All Are Welcome.**

## ORDER OF WORSHIP

*As the Prelude begins, we invite you into a period of quiet reflection as we begin our preparation for worship.  
Please **silence all electronic devices** and do not take flash photos during the service.*

PRELUDE	Contemplation on “Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence” <i>Richard Purvis (1913–1994)</i>
WELCOME	
* CALL TO WORSHIP	One: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, O Promised One: Once again we come to Advent and await your presence.  <b>All: Give us patience to seek the meaning of these busy days.</b> One: Give us the courage to wait in times of pain and trouble. <b>All: Give us the compassion to wait for one another.</b> One: Give us the faith to wait for the Messiah when we are threatened by the Herods of this world. <b>All: Give us the hope to wait for the Savior even when we cannot hear the angels singing.</b> One: Give us the love that does not wait when it meets Christ in our neighbor. <b>All: Giver of all good things, we worship you, O God.</b>
* HYMN 347	<b>Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence</b>
POETRY PRAYER	Blessing When the World Is Ending • <i>Jan Richardson</i>
SCRIPTURE READING	<i>Psalms 42</i>  As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God? My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me continually, “Where is your God?” These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I went with the throng, and led them in procession to the house of God, with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival. Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God. My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar. Deep calls to deep at the thunder of your cataracts; all your waves and your billows have gone over me. By day the Lord commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life. I say to God, my rock, “Why have you forgotten me? Why must I walk about mournfully because the enemy oppresses me?” As with a deadly wound in my body, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me continually, “Where is your God?” Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.

SOLO	Born in the Night, Mary’s Child • <i>Geoffrey Ainger (b. 1925)</i> <i>Text can be found at #158 in the hymnal.</i>
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### LIGHTING CANDLES OF REMEMBRANCE AND CONCERN

One:	This first candle we light to redeem the pain of loss; the loss of relationship, the loss of a job, the loss of health. We pause to gather up the pain of these losses. We offer it to God, asking that from our Savior’s hands we may receive the gift of peace.
<b>All:</b>	<b>Stay close to us, eternal God, and show us your light.</b>
One:	This second candle we light to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their names, their faces, the sound of their voices, the memory that binds them to us in this season.
<b>All:</b>	<b>Stay close to us, eternal God, and show us your light.</b>
One:	This third candle we light for ourselves this Christmastide. We pause and offer to you the stress of these recent weeks: the disbelief, the anger, the sadness, the overwhelming busyness.
<b>All:</b>	<b>Stay close to us, eternal God, and show us your light.</b>
One:	This fourth candle we light to honor the gift of hope which the Christmas story offers us. We pause and remember that God, who shares our life, promises us a place and time of no more pain and suffering.
<b>All:</b>	<b>Stay close to us, eternal God, and show us your light.</b>

*Once the four large candles have been lit, we invite you to come forward and light one or more  
votive candles as a sign of your prayers of remembrance and hope. The pastors are available to pray  
with you; please share your prayer requests with them when you come forward.*

### PRAYER

SOLO	In the Bleak Midwinter • <i>Christina Rossetti (1830–1894)</i> <i>arr. Gustav Holst (1874–1934)</i> <i>Text can be found at #144 in the hymnal.</i>
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READING	<i>Psalms 16</i>
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Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.  
I say to the Lord, “You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.”  
As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble, in whom is all my delight.  
Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows;  
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names upon my lips.  
The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.  
The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage.  
Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure.  
For you do not give me up to Sheol, or let your faithful one see the Pit.  
You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy;  
in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

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\* RESPONSIVE PRAYER

Prayer for the Night, from *A New Zealand Prayer Book*

One: Lord, it is night. The night is for stillness.

**All: Let us be still in the presence of God.  
It is night after a long day.  
What has been done has been done;  
what has not been done has not been done; let it be.**

One: The night is dark.

**All: Let our fears of the darkness of the world  
and of our own lives rest in you.**

One: The night is quiet.

**All: Let the quietness of your peace enfold us,  
all dear to us, and all who have no peace.**

One: The night heralds the dawn.

**All: Let us look expectantly to a new day,  
new joys, new possibilities.  
In your name we pray. Amen.**

\* HYMN 88

**O Come, O Come Emmanuel** (*verses 1, 5, 6 and 7*)

BENEDICTION

*You are invited to stay for a time of silent meditation following the service.*

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*Clergy*

The Rev. Kate Dunn • The Rev. Sarah Speed

*Seminarians*

Caroline Grindrod • JY Lee

The ministry of music this evening is offered by  
Patrick Kreeger, Associate Organist • Christopher Seefeldt, Soloist



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Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church

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