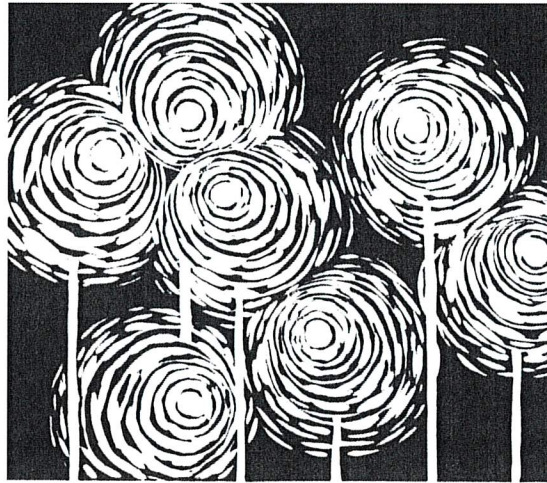


Participant's Guide: An Ecumenical Service of Remembrance and Healing

*to acknowledge the grief and sense of loss felt by many this holiday
season and to stand together in solidarity, prayer, and hope.*



*Community Church of Santa Rosa Beach
3524 US Highway 98 West, Santa Rosa Beach, FL
December 14, 2021 at 1 p.m.*

Ministers: Ronnie McBrayer, A Simple Faith
Stephen Squires, Community Church
H. L. "Scooter" Ward, Jr., Community Church
Richard Proctor, Christ the King Episcopal
David Butler, Faith Assembly Christian Church
CC Whittinghill, Faith Assembly Christian Church
Emily Proctor, Freeport Presbyterian
Shawn Baker, New Life Church
Michael Hartley, Saint Rita Catholic Church
Dan Tharpe

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel 154

Unison

Em D B G Am C Am G B D G D Bm G C G B

1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive
 2 O come, thou Day - spring, come and cheer our spir - its by thine
 3 O come, thou Wis - dom from on high, and or - der all things,
 4 O come, De - sire of na - tions, bind all peo - ples in one

Am Em Bm Em Am C Am Em G B7 F# Em Bm C D Em

Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here, un -
 ad - vent here; dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of night, and
 far and nigh; to us the path of knowl - edge show, and
 heart and mind; bid en - vy, strife and quar - rels cease; fill

Refrain (Harmony)

D Bm G G B Am C Am G B D G D Em Bm G

til the Son of God ap - pear.
 death's dark shad - ows put to flight.
 cause us in her ways to go. Re - joice! Re - joice! Em -
 the whole world with heav - en's peace.

Am C Am G B D Em D F# G G B C G B Am Em D F# Em

man - u - el shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el!

Prelude (Instrumental Music)

Welcome & Opening Prayer

Call to Worship

Leader: In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
What has come into being in Him was life,
and the life was the light of all people.

**People: The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it.**

Music – O Come, O Come Emmanuel – Verses 1 & 2

A Reading from Ecclesiastes 3

Leader: A Reading from Ecclesiastes 3:
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 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.

Leader: We light this candle for all who weep
and mourn the absence of loved ones
this holiday season, recognizing that death
and loss touch every human life.

Moving through any kind of change can be challenging,
even painful, but comfort is always available
through God in Christ, who abides in us
and invites us to abide in Him.

Leader: Jesus did not pity those who mourn, but said
to his followers in his Sermon on the Mount,
“Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.”

Leader: May we find some of that comfort for ourselves today.
And as we acknowledge our loss, may we find ourselves
blessed by gratitude, wisdom, peace, faith, hope, love
and courage for everyday living.

**People: The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it.**

Music - O Come, O Come Emmanuel - Verse 3 & 4

A Reading from John 11

Leader: A Reading from John 11:
When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him,
she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord,
if you had been here, my brother would not have died."
When Jesus saw her weeping,
and the Jews who came with her also weeping,
He was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.
He said, "Where have you laid him?"
They said to him, "Lord, come and see."
Jesus began to weep. So some of them said,
"See how he loved him!" But some of them said,
"Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man
have kept this man from dying?"

Leader: We light this candle for all who are angry at God
for not preventing the losses that wreak such havoc
in our lives and others'.

The existence of so much suffering, sin, and evil
is a mystery not easily explained.
Still, we wonder that Emmanuel, God with us,
was also angry, and suffered grief, betrayal, and even
death. We pray for reconciliation with God;
however, we find ourselves estranged.

Abide with Me

Eb $\frac{Gm}{Bb}$ Bb7 Cm $\frac{Eb}{G}$ Ab Bb Cm7 $\frac{Bb7}{D}$ Eb

1 A - bide with me, fast falls the e - ven - tide;
 2 Swift to its close ebbs out life's lit - tle day;
 3 I need your pres - ence ev - ery pass - ing hour;
 4 I fear no foe, with you at hand to bless;
 5 Hold now your cross be - fore my clos - ing eyes;

Eb $\frac{Ab}{C}$ $\frac{Eb}{Bb}$ Ab Eb Fm7 $\frac{Bb}{D}$ Eb $\frac{F7}{C}$ Bb

the dark - ness deep - ens: Lord, with me a - bide!
 earth's joys grow dim, its glo - ries pass a - way;
 what but your grace can foil the tempt - er's power?
 ills have no weight, and tears no bit - ter - ness.
 shine through the gloom and point me to the skies:

Eb $\frac{Gm}{Bb}$ Bb7 Cm $\frac{Eb}{G}$ Abmaj9 Ab C+ C7 Fm

When oth - er help - ers fail, and com - forts flee,
 change and de - cay in all a - round I see;
 Who, like your - self, my guide and stay can be?
 Where is death's sting? Where, grave, your vic - to - ry?
 heaven's morn - ing breaks, and earth's vain shad - ows flee;

$\frac{Bb}{Ab}$ $\frac{Eb}{G}$ $\frac{Bb7}{F}$ Eb Bb7 Cm $\frac{Fm}{Ab}$ $\frac{Eb}{Bb}$ Bb7 Eb

help - of the help - less, O a - bide with me.
 O Lord who chang - es not, a - bide with me.
 Through cloud and sun - shine, Lord, a - bide with me.
 I tri - umph still, if you a - bide with me.
 in life, in death, O Lord, a - bide with me.

**People: The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it.**

Music – “Abide with Me”

**A Reading from Matthew 2 and a Lamentation for the Slaughter
of the Innocents**

Leader: A reading from Matthew, chapter 2:
When Herod saw that he had been tricked
by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed
all the children in and around Bethlehem
who were two years old or under, according to the time
that he had learned from the wise men.

Leader: Then was fulfilled what had been spoken
through the prophet Jeremiah:
“A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation.”

**People: It was Rachel weeping for her children,
refusing to be comforted because they were no more.**

Leader: And still too many cry, on every continent and in every
nation, who have lost loved ones too soon and
unnecessarily to violence and war, to famine and disease,
to abuse, addiction, mental illness, and suicide, to
miscarriage, still birth, and other untimely deaths.

We cry out for the innocents slaughtered
all over the world, where misguided ideology, vengeance,
and mental illness have taken so many lives.

Leader: We cry out for those lives lost and for homes, businesses
and communities devastated by natural disasters.

Leader: Especially we cry out for those families who lost livelihoods and loved ones to the Coronavirus pandemic and who had to remain painfully separated from their loved ones in times of suffering and dying and grieving.

A voice was heard in Ramah
sobbing and loudly lamenting.

**People: It was Rachel weeping for her children,
refusing to be comforted because they were no more.**

(silence)

Leader: A voice is heard in all places of sadness.
It is the voice of God, our Mother and Father,
who has seen the pain of her children
and seen beyond it. It says,

Leader: “Keep your voice from weeping
and keep your eyes from tears;
for your grieving has been heard
and your work shall be rewarded....
There is hope for your future.
I have prepared a place for your children
and will keep them in perfect peace,
until the old things have disappeared and
there is a new heaven and a new earth.”

We light this candle for all who died unnecessarily
or too soon, and for all whose lives and whose holidays
will never be the same because of it.

Let us pray together...

**People: Gracious God, hold in your loving embrace those
whose names are written on our hearts or on our
consciences until the day when we see them again
and know that our grieving is over and that all your
promises are kept.**

People: Move us as Christians and as citizens to turn our anger and lamentation into a commitment to reduce the unnecessary loss of life, and into a commitment of resources to care for the most vulnerable among us. Amen.

A TIME FOR HEALING AND REMEMBERING

A Reading from Romans 8

Leader: A reading from Romans 8:
I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.
For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God...
We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

Leader: We are here to recognize our losses and remember those we loved who have died.
When the loss is someone we have loved or been loved by, we grieve mightily but we may also rejoice and feel gratitude for what we had, the person we knew, or the love we shared before the loss.

As we light a candle in remembrance, as far as is possible, let us do so with gratitude for all that was good about their time here on earth and with us.

Leader: But sometimes when a loved one dies there is also turmoil caused by the painful and broken parts of relationships that still need healing or forgiveness. Sometimes our loss is not a death of a person but the death of a trusting relationship, a covenant such as marriage, a job or some hope we had for the future, and the pain or anger overwhelms any sense of gratitude, and we can only lift up to God the jagged edges of our hearts and lives for healing.

Leader: For some of us our loss this holiday season may be a loss to our sense of health, ability, or mental well-being. Perhaps we are facing a new diagnosis, testing, chronic pain or illness, treatment, or a new limitation that may affect our ability to enjoy or experience the holidays the way we would like or the way we feel others expect us to.

And so we light this candle for all
who are most in need of healing and peace.

Lighting of the Candles/Anointing & Prayers

Leader: As the music plays, we invite you to come forward to the table at the top of each aisle, take a candle from the basket, light it from the candle in the center of each table and lay it on the table in remembrance of a loved one who has died or a loss heavy on your heart or in hope of healing or a new start. You may light the candle in silence or name the person, loss or hope aloud.

During this time, there will also be pastors available in the back to offer an anointing of oil and individual prayers for healing and wholeness for anyone who would like this in addition to lighting a candle or instead of it.

Leader: Let us pray.
Gracious God, source of all healing,
in Jesus Christ you heal the sick and mend the broken.
Bless for us this oil,
pressed from the fruits of the earth,
given to us as a sign of healing and forgiveness,
and of the fullness of life you give.

Leader: In Christ you revealed yourself to be
the light of the world.
As these candles bring light into this holy space,
may your love shine into every dark corner
of our lives and hearts.

By your Spirit, and through our prayers for one another,
come upon all who are in need of healing, comfort,
forgiveness and new life
that they may know your healing touch,
be comforted and made whole,
to the glory of Jesus Christ our redeemer. Amen.

*Those who wish, come forward one at a time to light a candle,
either in silence or naming their loved one out loud. Several ministers
are also stationed around the sanctuary to pray with you, if you desire
to do this.*

Instrumental music plays

Litany of Remembrance

Leader: Having lit our candles, please join me in the litany of remembrance for loved ones lost:
In the rising of the sun and its going down,

People: We remember them.

Leader: In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of the winter,

People: We remember them.

Leader: In the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring,

People: We remember them.

Leader: In the blueness of the sky and in the warmth of summer,

People: We remember them.

Leader: At the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of autumn,

People: We remember them.

Leader: At the beginning of the year and when it ends,

People: We remember them.

Leader: When we are lost and sick at heart,

People: We remember them.

Leader: When we have joys we yearn to share,

People: We remember them.

Leader: As long as we live, they too shall live,
for they have shaped who we are and

People: We remember them.

Leader: I invite you to gaze at these flames... then close your eyes.
You should still be able to see them in your mind's eye.
So it is with our loved ones.

Leader: Having remembered our loved ones,
with gratitude in our hearts,
we now light the candle of love
for the love we have for life
and for God who is the source of life,
for the love that those we have lost had for us
and the love we had and still have for them,
for the love we have for those still physically present
in our lives, for the love that has supported us in our grief,
and for the love that sustains us going forward.

Leader: The light shines in the darkness,
People: **and the darkness has not overcome it.**

Special Music

A Unison Reading of Psalm 23

Leader: Please join me in saying together Psalm 23:

People: **The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil; for you are with me;
your rod and your staff— they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.**

Music – It Is Well with My Soul

When Peace Like a River

C C⁴ C C G F E G⁷ D G G⁷ C Am E⁷ B Am C

1 When peace like a riv - er at - tend - eth my way, when sor - rows like
 2 Though Sa - tan should buf - fet, though tri - als should come, let this blest as -
 3 My sin—O, the bliss of this glo - ri - ous thought, my sin—not in
 4 And, Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight, the clouds be rolled

Am G D G G⁷ C C E F A⁷ Dm D⁷

sea bil - lows roll, what - ev - er my lot, thou hast taught me to
 sur - ance con - trol: that Christ has re - gard - ed my help - less es -
 part but the whole, is nailed to the cross and I bear it no
 back as a scroll, the trump shall re - sound and the Lord shall de -

G Am G C Dm⁷ C G C C Refrain N.C. C C E

say, "It is well, it is well with my soul."
 taste, and has shed his own blood for my soul. It is well
 more: Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul! It is
 scend: "E - ven so"—it is well with my soul.

G N.C. G G⁷ C F C G G C

well with my soul, it is well, it is well with my soul.
 well with my soul,

A Litany from Romans 8

Leader: Who will separate us from the love of Christ?

**People: Neither death, nor life,
nor things present, nor things to come,
nor powers, nor height, nor depth,
nor anything else in all creation,
will be able to separate us from the love of God
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.**

Benediction

Postlude

The cover image is by Martha Kelly, from her illustrations of the Presbyterian Women's Study Guide to Revelation (www.marthakellyart.com).

“Lamentation for the Slaughter of the Innocents” was adapted from the Iona Community Wild Goose Worship Group’s “Women Weeping: Christmas Meditation 2” in *Cloth for the Cradle: Worship resources and readings for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2000), pp. 118-121.