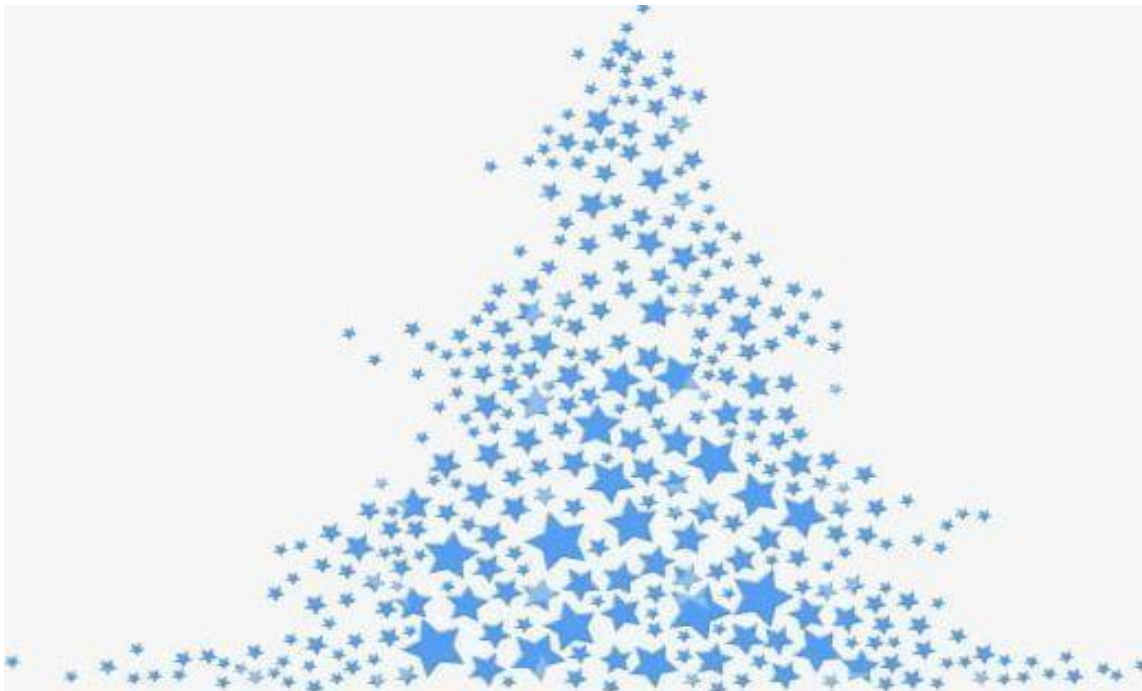


**SALEM EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
4873 Cleveland Road, Wooster, Ohio 44691



*Building Faith by Praying for God's Guidance, Hearing God's Word,  
Sharing God's Grace, Serving God's Children*

**MINISTERS: The People of Salem**

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December 21, 2024

Blue Christmas

*<sup>33</sup> but those who listen to me will be  
secure and will live at ease, without dread  
of disaster." Proverbs 1:33*

*"In Times of Adversity"*

*Pause, dear one, and rest a moment with Me.*

*Allow Me to breathe upon you with the sweet fresh breath of peace.*

*Let Me enliven and invigorate your heart and mind.*

*Passing through adversity can gnarl your thoughts,  
deplete your energy, thin out your faith.*

*But I will not let you fall.*

*I will keep you in perfect peace; quietness will rule your heart,  
and you will be strong.*

*I will answer you and bless you according to my promises.*

*Not one word of my promises to you will ever fail.*

*For this reason, you must learn to be at rest.*

*Marie Chapien*

**We Gather in God's Name**

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**Prelude**

**Welcome**

**Words of welcome**

L: Welcome to this time of stillness.

We invite you to participate as you feel comfortable.

## Reading

Sometimes it seems ...

that there is no room at Christmas for sadness,  
there's no place for hearts that are blue,  
all the world wants to hear is a world full of  
cheer, not a sigh, not a tear, not from you.

Sometimes it seems...

there's no room at Christmas for  
loneliness, and there is no place for your  
emptiness and grief.

All the world wants is peace, mistletoe and Christmas trees  
not a heartache that mars its beliefs

Sometimes it seems...

there's no room at Christmas for sickness,  
there's no place or time to be ill.

All the world wants is health, prosperity and  
wealth, not a pain that can spoil its goodwill.

Sometimes it seems...

there's no room at Christmas for Jesus,  
there's no place for His family, too,

all the world would

not share, no one

seems to really care,

A stable will just have  
to do.

But in reality...

Yes, there's room at Christmas for sadness,

There's a place in God's heart for you.

For He knows pain and loss,  
Which He felt on the cross,  
So this candle is lit here for you...  
For Christ knows what it's like to be blue.

*(Silence for Reflection)*

### **Call to Worship**

**L:** Jesus said, “Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” And so, we invite each of you to this time of peaceful worship. Flee for a while from your tasks:

**C: Hide yourself for a little while from the turmoil of your thoughts.**

**L:** Come, cast aside your burdensome cares and put aside your laborious pursuits.

**C: Come, give your time to God, and rest in him for a while.**

### **Opening Prayer**

**L:** Creator God, lover of the universe, we come to you in this quiet place seeking your reassurance and your hope. We come in the midst of noise, listening for your gentle heartbeat.

For those who are chilled by grief and pain,  
bring the warmth of your love.

For those who are overwhelmed by feelings that exhaust  
and stifle, bring the cooling breeze of your love.

For those who are caught in the glare of  
expectations,  
bring the comforting darkness of your love.

For those who find themselves in shadows of  
anxiety,  
bring the morning dawn of your love.

Breathe courage into our day.

Whisper strength into our dreams. Forgive us, God.

Continue to love us, we pray, and help us finally to hear  
your assurance that you travel beside us, and you  
will help carry our burdens. Amen.

**Hymn**     *Creator of the Stars of Night*     **Red Hymnal #245**

**A Liturgy of Remembering**     (*Using the Advent Wreath Candles*)

**L:** This first candle we light to remember those whom we have  
loved and lost.

*(Pause while the first candle is lit.)*

**L:** We pause to remember their name, their face, their voice,  
the memory that binds them to us in this season.

**C: May God's eternal love surround them.**

**L:** This second candle we light is to redeem the pain of loss;  
the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of  
health.

*(Pause while the second candle is lit.)*

**L:** We pause to gather up the pain of the past and offer it to  
God, asking that from God's hands we receive the gift of  
peace.

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

**L:** This third candle we light is to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember these past weeks and month; the disbelief, the anger, the down times, the poignancy of reminiscing, the hugs and handshakes of family and friends, all those who stood with us.

*(Pause while the third candle is lit.)*

**L:** We give thanks for all the support we have known.

**C:** **Let us remember that dawn defeats darkness.**

**L:** This fourth candle is lit to remember our faith and the gift of hope which the Christmas story offers to us.

*(Pause while the fourth candle is lit.)*

**L:** We remember that God who shares our life promises us a place and time of no more pain and suffering.

**C:** **Let us remember the one who shows the way, who brings the truth and who bears the light.**

**Carol**    *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (verses 1-4)*    **Red Hymnal #257**

**Reading**

**Ecclesiastes 3:1-8**

<sup>1</sup>For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

<sup>2</sup>a time to be born, and a time to die;

a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

<sup>3</sup>a time to kill, and a time to heal;

a time to break down, and a time to build up;

<sup>4</sup>a time to weep, and a time to laugh;

a time to mourn, and a time to dance;  
<sup>5</sup>a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones  
together;  
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;  
<sup>6</sup>a time to seek, and a time to lose;  
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;  
<sup>7</sup>a time to tear, and a time to sew;  
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
<sup>8</sup>a time to love, and a time to hate;  
a time for war, and a time for peace.

L The Word of the Lord.      C Thanks be to God.

### Reading

### Psalm 23

<sup>1</sup>The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.  
<sup>2</sup>He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
he leads me beside still waters;  
<sup>3</sup>he restores my soul.  
He leads me in right paths  
for his name's sake.  
<sup>4</sup>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.  
<sup>5</sup>You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.  
<sup>6</sup>Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life,





## **Gospel**

**Matthew 11:28 – 30**

<sup>28</sup>Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>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. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

L: The Gospel of the Lord. C: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

## **Message**

Tim Barrage

### **Candle lighting**

*(We invite you to come forward to light a candle in memory of a loved one, or for a circumstance or event that makes this season difficult for you.)*

## **Musical Selection**

**Sandy Smith**

### **The Prayers**

L: In the Spirit of this season let us now confidently ask God for all the things we need:

L: For ourselves as we participate in whatever way we can this Christmastime:

C: **God hear our prayer and in your mercy answer.**

L: For the persons we have loved that have died, for all the losses that we know, that they may be redeemed by your Easter promise:

C: **God hear our prayer and in your mercy answer.**

L: For our family and friends, that they may know love and peace and happiness in you:

C: **God hear our prayer and in your mercy answer.**

L: For those we do not know, who know pain and loneliness as a constant companion, and for those who live without hope, that they may hear and receive the glad tidings of your love for them:

C: **God hear our prayer and in your mercy answer.**

L: For the peace proclaimed by the Christmas angels, to come throughout the whole world:

C: **God hear our prayer and in your mercy answer.**

~ You are encouraged to share your petitions at this time,  
or to offer them in silent prayer ~

L: God of great compassion and love, listen to the prayers of these your people. Grant to all, especially the bereaved and troubled ones this Christmas, the blessing we ask in the name of Christ Jesus, your Son.

C: **Amen.**

**Hymn**     *It Came Upon A Midnight Clear*     **Red Hymnal #282**

**Departure (in unison)**

C: **May we be gentle with ourselves, remembering that we are created in the image of God. May we go into the world with honesty and thanksgiving, embracing tears, laughter and all that is good. Amen.**

**Benediction**

L: As you go on your way may God go with you, May he go before you to show you the way; may he go behind you to encourage you, above you to watch over, within you to give you peace. In the Name of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Amen.

Sending Hymn

*Silent Night*

Red Hymnal #281

*At the conclusion of our sending hymn you are welcome to remain in the sanctuary to pray, ponder or reflect. As a courtesy, please consider others as you exit the sanctuary. Join us in fellowship hall following the service if you would like to talk about anything.*

**Postlude**

**Sandy Smith**

*Liturgical elements and prayers are drawn from:*

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***THIS WEEK AT SALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH***

**Sunday, December 22**

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent

9:00 a.m. Bible Study (Facebook Live Stream)

10:00 a.m. Worship (Facebook Live Stream)

11:00 a.m. Fellowship

12:00 p.m. Council Meeting

2:00 p.m. Avenue Worship

5:00 p.m. YouTube Livestream Replay

**Monday, December 23**

6:00 p.m. NFL Monday Night! Free Community Meal

7:00 p.m. and Chosen Bible Study

**Tuesday, December 24**

7:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

***NEXT WEEK AT SALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH***

**Sunday, December 29**

Lessons & Carols Service

9:00 a.m. Bible Study (Facebook Live Stream)

10:00 a.m. Worship (Facebook Live Stream)

11:00 a.m. Fellowship

5:00 p.m. YouTube Livestream Replay

**Monday, December 30**

6:00 p.m. NFL Monday Night! Free Community Meal

7:00 p.m. and Chosen Bible Study