

The image features three lit candles of varying heights and widths, casting a warm, yellow glow. The background is dark with a pattern of small, red, star-like sparkles. In the top left corner, there is a small branch of greenery with red berries. The text is overlaid on the upper portion of the image.

# LIGHT

SHINES IN THE DARKNESS

*T*he light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness did not  
overcome it.

—John 1:5

## FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

*"To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."*

### Service of the Long Shadows

December 21, 2014 2:30 pm

607 Lynn St. - Tipton, IA 52772; 563-886-2331  
office@tiptonumc.org Website: www.tiptonumc.org

Leaders: Sherry Willey, Paul Frederiksen

Music: Becky Young

## Gathering

### Call to Worship

Whether this is the first Christmas without someone we love, or we are still hurting from loss or suffering from long ago, we gather today to worship God in the midst of mourning. We gather to shed tears if they come, to hold hands if they are available, and to join our voices with one another and our forebears in the faith who still cry out, "How long?"

May we pray:

**Come, Holy Spirit.**

**Comfort us and all who mourn this day.**

**Give us strength to grieve as we must.**

**Help us receive your healing in the midst of our pain,  
and find new order after the chaos of loss;  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

**Hymn** "When We Are Called to Sing Your Praise" No. 2216

### Lighting the Advent Candles

First Candle: The first candle represents our grief. The pain of our loss is intense. It reminds us of the depth of our love.

Second: The light of this second candle represents the courage to confront our sorrow; to comfort each other; to change our lives.

Third: This third candle is a light to all of our memories; of the times we laughed, the times we cried, the times we were angry with each other, the silly things we did, the caring and joy we shared.

Fourth: The fourth candle is the light of love as we enter this holiday season. Day by day, we cherish the special place in our hearts that will always be reserved for those and that we have loved and lost. "The greatest of these is love."

**WORD AND RESPONSE** (responsively) Psalm 84:3-11

L: O Lord of hosts, my Ruler and my God, at your altars even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young.

**ALL: Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise!**

L: Blessed are those whose strength is in you,  
In whose heart are the highways to Zion.

**ALL: As they go through the valley of tears,  
They make it a place of springs;**

L: They go from strength to strength;  
the God of gods will be seen in Zion.

**ALL: O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer;**

L: For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.

**ALL: I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my  
God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.**

L: For the Lord God is a sun and shield, and bestows favor and honor.

**ALL: No good thing does the Lord withhold.**

*Silent Reflection...*

Leader: Restore us, O God of hosts.

**All: Turn the light of your face toward us,  
that we may be saved.**

**Hebrews 10:32-39**

**Hymn** "Nearer, My God, to Thee" (vss. 1,2,4) No. 528

**Message** "In the Midst of Longest Night"  
**& Lighting of the Christ Candle**

**Act of Remembrance**

*Write a name or source of grief or joy, one per small piece of paper. Then bring them to the manger, where they will be used to 'make the bed' for Jesus. It's on such events and realities of life that Jesus makes his bed, as an infant; and for those he died and rose and lives again.*

*Then take a candle to your seat and continue in prayer as you wish.*

## Prayers of the People

"O Lord, Hear My Prayer"

No. 2200

*O Lord, hear my prayer. O Lord, hear my prayer;  
when I call, answer me.*

*O Lord, hear my prayer. O Lord, hear my prayer.  
Come and listen to me.*

For all who seek you for restoration,  
and all who eat the bread of sorrow...

*"O Lord, Hear My Prayer"*

For all who are sick, weak, or worn down...

*"O Lord..."*

For all who have experienced loss through death, separation, or  
the ending of relationships...

*"O Lord..."*

For the gifts of faith, hope, and endurance;  
and the surprising return of joy...

*"O Lord..."*

## Sharing Peace

*Share the peace of Christ with one another by lighting each  
other's candle and then exchanging lit candles.*

**Song** "When Christmas Morn ..." (vss. 1 & 3) No. 232

## Blessing And Dismissal

Leader: May God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
bless us and keep us, this day and always.

**ALL: Amen.**



*The Worship Center is open and dimly lit if you'd like to go there  
and spend some time. Or, you may join one another immediately  
for refreshments and sharing stories of your life. Do as you  
wish. Peace be with you.*