

Join us in a safe space to sit, breathe & reflect on whatever you might be feeling, or just not feeling, this holiday season.

Blue Christmas Service

The Longest Night

A SERVICE FOR GRIEF, HEALING & HOPE

DECEMBER

SUNDAY

21

06:00 PM

Elk River Lutheran Church

729 Main St, Elk River MN

A COLLABORATION OF



UNION UCC
Congregational Church

Blue Christmas

The Longest Night

A SERVICE OF GRIEF, HEALING, AND HOPE

THANK YOU FOR BEING QUIET BEFORE THE SERVICE SO PEOPLE CAN PRAY. Please turn off all electronic devices throughout the service out of respect for others and the liturgy.

Bathrooms, complete with changing tables for little ones, are located in the Fellowship Hall in the corner opposite of the main entrance.

Assisted Listening Devices are available. Please contact the Media Booth

CLERGY:

Rev. Nora Elliott, Union Congregational Church

Rev. Mike Mannisto, Guardian Angels Senior Services

Rev. Nathan Mugaas, Elk River Lutheran Church

Rev. Anne Schaefer, Elk River Lutheran Church

MUSICIANS: Taylor Quinn, Lisa Griffin (acc), Will Lee (guitar/voice), Kelli Sweeney (violin)

GATHERING

WELCOME

Rev. Nathan Mugaas & Rev. Anne Schaefer

GATHERING HYMN

“Come, All Who Are Weary”

CALL TO WORSHIP

Rev. Mike Mannisto

Pastor: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by God, and without God nothing came to be.

What came to be through God was life, and this life was the light of the world.

All: The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

OPENING PRAYER

Rev. Mike Mannisto

Pastor: Merciful God,

**All: In this season of rejoicing, we come to you weary and grieving. In this season of feasting, we hunger for healing and relief. In this season of light, our hearts are veiled in sorrow and shadow. Will this season ever end?
“Yes.” We hear your “Yes.” Those who are weary will find rest. Those who mourn will be comforted. Those who hunger will be filled.
AMEN**

LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE

Rev. Nora P. Elliott

The first candle is lit.

Pastor: We light this first candle to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember clearly their faces, their voices, their bodies. We embrace and give thanks for the memories that bind them to us in this season of expectation, when all Creation waits for the Light.

All: **We remember them with love. May God's eternal love surround them.**

HYMN

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

The second candle is lit.

Pastor: We light this second candle to remember the pain of loss: loss of relationships, loss of trust, loss of jobs, loss of health, loss of faith, the loss of joy. We acknowledge and embrace the pain of the past, O God, and we offer it to You, asking that into our wounded hearts and open hands, You will place the gift of peace, shalom.

All: **We remember that through You, all things are possible. Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into Your future.**

HYMN

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

The third candle is lit.

Pastor: We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and for some of us years that have been heavy with our burdens. We accept and lay before you, God, the sharpness of memory,

the sadness and grief, the hurt and fear, the anger and pain.
We accept and lay before you the ways we feel we have fallen short, and the times we have spent blaming ourselves, and you, for all that we have suffered.
We accept and lay before you the time we have walked alone, in darkness, and in knowledge of our own mortality.

All: We remember that though we have journeyed far, and that, while lost, we may have turned away from the light, the light itself has not failed. Though the night is dark and the season feels long, we know that Christ is our dawn - and His light will overcome every shadow.

HYMN

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

The fourth candle is lit.

Pastor: We light this fourth candle to remember faith, the gift of light and hope that God offers to us in the stories of Hanukkah and of Christmas, which both also began in abandonment, insecurity, and humbleness, in a time of war and in a poor stable.
We remember that the loving God who kept the light shining in the temple and who came to share this life with us promises us comfort and peace.

All: We remember the One who shares our burdens, who shows us the way to the Light, and who journeys with us into all our tomorrows.

HYMN

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

MUSIC

“Breath of Heaven”

THE READINGS

SCRIPTURE, MESSAGE, & PRAYER PRACTICE

Rev. Anne Schaefer

HYMN

“There is a Balm in Gilead” v. 1 & 3

SCRIPTURE, MESSAGE, & PRAYER PRACTICE

Rev. Nora P. Elliott

PSALM 23

Rev. Nathan Mugaas

Yahweh is my shepherd;

I shall not want.

God makes me lie down in green pastures; and leads me beside still waters.

God restores my soul; and leads me in the paths of righteousness for God's name's sake.

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will 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 runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of Yahweh forever.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Rev. Mike Mannisto

Pastor: God, in your mercy,

ALL: Hear our prayer.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH FOR CHRISTMAS

Rev. Anne Schaefer

Pastor: Christians, what do you believe?

ALL: God did not wait till the world was ready,
till nations were at peace.
God came when the Heavens were unsteady
and prisoners cried out for release.

Pastor: God did not wait for the perfect time.
God came when the need was deep and great.
God dined with sinners in all their grime,
turned water into wine.

All: God did not wait till hearts were pure.
In joy God came to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.
To a world like ours, of anguished shame,
God came and God's Light would not go out.

Pastor: God came to a world which did not mesh;
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh,
the Maker of the stars was born.

All: We cannot wait till the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
For to share our grief, to touch our pain,
God came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!

HYMN

(ELW # 256) "Comfort, Comfort Ye, My People" v. 1 & 3

CLOSING PRAYERS

Rev. Nora P. Elliott

Pastor: Let us pray.

All: **Another day will come, O God.**

I know not what it may bring forth, but make me ready for whatever it may be.

If I am to stand up, help me to stand bravely.

If I am to sit still, help me to sit quietly.

If I am to lie low, help me to do it patiently.

And if I am to do nothing, help me do it gallantly.

Make these words more than words, and give me the Spirit of thy Peace. Amen.

Pastor: O God, support us all the day long in this troubled life, until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then God, in thy mercy, grant us safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last.

All: **AMEN**

CLOSING BLESSING

Pastor: May the light of God's Holy Spirit shine like these candles in the darkness, lighting the way for all who feel despairing, lost, or forgotten, and grant that this light may come to dwell so deeply in your hearts that when you leave this place, it may shine on, for you and for those you meet along the way. In the name of Jesus, the Light of the World.

All: AMEN, Thanks be to God!

POSTLUDE

***Thank you to The Rev. Nora Elliott, Rev. Mike Mannisto,
Rev. Nathan Mugaas and Rev. Anne Schaefer
for leading us in worship this evening!***

STAY IN THE SANCTUARY AS LONG AS YOU LIKE.
Light refreshments are provided for those seeking fellowship,
and we understand if some prefer a quiet exit instead.

RESOURCES

GRIEF COUNSELING

- The Grief Club of Minnesota (griefclubmn.org)
- Twin Cities North Suburban Grief Support Coalition (www.growingthroughloss.org)
- Compassionate Friends (compassionatefriends.org), supporting a family after a child dies
- Family Means Center for Grief & Loss (griefloss.org)
- She Climbs Mountains (sheclimbsmountains.org); for women who have lost their mothers.

MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

- Suicide Prevention Hotline: 988 (yes, it's only three numbers. You can call for help, advice, concern, for yourself or for someone else.)
- Central MN Mental Health Center 24 Hour Mental Health Crisis Hotline 320-253-5555 or 800-635-8008

ABUSE

- Rivers of Hope 763-295-3433
A 24 hour Crisis Line -- Rivers of Hope strives to positively impact the dynamics of domestic violence, and to empower victims to move beyond survival through legal and general advocacy, education, and interagency collaboration.
- Central MN Sexual Assault Center 800-237-5090
A 24-hour crisis intervention center for victims of all forms of sexual violence.

*Tonight's offering will be donated to Thumbs Up.
Thank you for your donation!*

THUMBS UP was founded in 2014 by several community members in honor of two great men, Bob Schmit and Chuck Dahlheimer, who like many others took their lives after living in silence from a mental illness.



THUMBS UP MISSION:

Bringing awareness to mental health and providing support and resources to all. THUMBS UP is all about EMBRACING those struggling and breaking the stigma around mental health.

CONNECTING, SUPPORTING and ENCOURAGING one another to talk about their feelings and challenges and to **“KEEP MOVING FORWARD”**.

We want to **EDUCATE and TEACH** about mental illness, the warning signs of suicide, what you can do help others who struggle, and community awareness initiatives.



Address: 729 Main St NW
Elk River, MN 55330
Phone: 763-595-1216
Website: elkriverlutheran.org



Corporate Address:
508 Freeport Ave, NW - Suite A
Elk River, MN 55330
Phone: 763-241-4438
Website: Guardianangelsmn.org



UNION UCC
Congregational Church

"Inspiring people to unite for a peaceful loving world"

Address: 1118 4th Street NW, Elk River, MN 55330
Phone: 763-441-1203
Website: www.elkriverucc.org

Elk River Lutheran Church is a forward-thinking congregation made up of people of all ages. We are located in the remodeled bank building on the Mississippi River in downtown Elk River. As a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) partner, we strive to be a welcoming and accepting community to all people.

Our mission is: Trusting in God's grace, an accepting, joyful community, serving God and neighbor.

Guardian Angels Senior Services – More Than Senior Living – A Community of Care. Guardian Angels provides innovative housing, health care, and supportive services that help seniors thrive in body, mind, and spirit.

As a faith-based nonprofit, it is our mission to provide exceptional whole-person care to seniors and their families in the spirit of Christ's love. Our community pastor and staff provide loving care and support to all residents, regardless of personal faith or beliefs. We joyfully host worship services and other opportunities for spiritual engagement every week.

Union Congregational Church UCC is a compassionate, Bible-centered, Open & Affirming, Christian congregation, certified Earthwise with a long history of support for homeless and migrant individuals, nestled in the quiet streets near historic downtown Elk River. We welcome into our community all people of every age, race, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, economic and social status, ability, faith background, and family structure. No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here. We are committed to hearing God's ancient story anew in our lives and in the world to-day. We are seekers who are open to mystery, questions, and fresh perspectives. Faith is a lifetime journey and open-hearted education guides our way.